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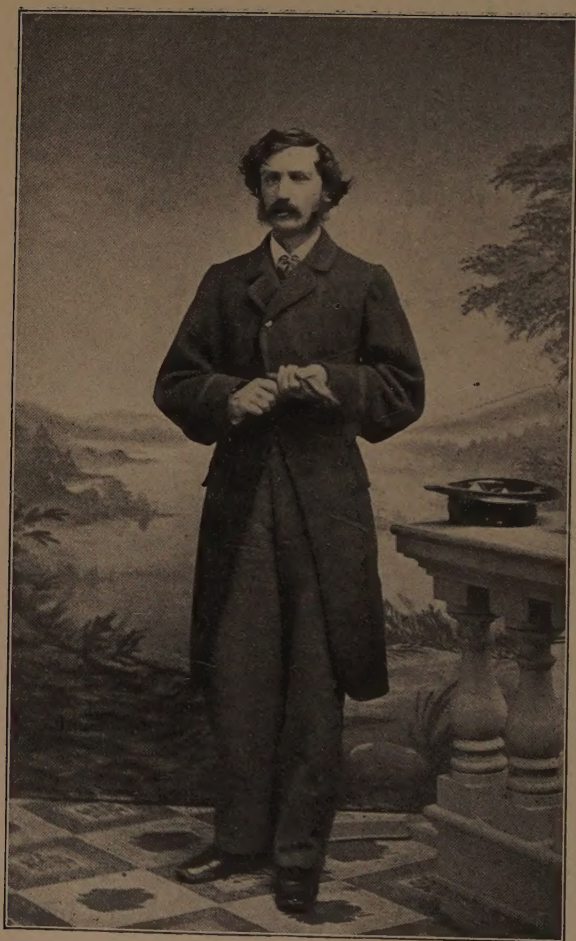
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THE CRUSADE OF THE EXCELSIOR
THE HERITAGE OF DEDLOW MARSH
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THE CRUSADE OF THE
EXCELSIOR

17540

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The Crusade of the Excelsior.

PART I. IN BONDS.

CHAPTER I.

A CRUSADER AND A SIGN.

It was the 4th of August, 1854, off Cape Corrientes. Morning was breaking over a heavy sea, and the closely-reefed topsails of a barque that ran before it bearing down upon the faint outline of the Mexican coast. Already the white peak of Colima showed, ghost-like, in the east; already the long sweep of the Pacific was gathering strength and volume as it swept uninterruptedly into the opening Gulf of California.

As the cold light increased, it could be seen that the vessel showed evidence of a long voyage and stress of weather. She had lost one of her spars, and her star-board davits rolled emptily. Nevertheless, her rigging was taut and ship-shape, and her decks scrupulously clean. Indeed, in that uncertain light, the only moving figure besides the two motionless shadows at the wheel was engaged in scrubbing the quarter-deck — which, with its grated settees and stacked camp-chairs, seemed to indicate the presence of cabin passengers. For the barque Excelsior, from New York to San Francisco, had discharged the bulk of her cargo at Callao, and had extended her liberal cabin accommodation to swell the feverish Californian immigration, still in its height.

Suddenly there was a slight commotion on deck. An

order, issued from some invisible depth of the cabin, was so unexpected that it had to be repeated sternly and peremptorily. A bustle forward ensued, two or three other shadows sprang up by the bulwarks, then the two men bent over the wheel, the *Excelsior* slowly swung round on her heel, and, with a parting salutation to the coast, bore away to the northwest and the open sea again.

"What's up now?" growled one of the men at the wheel to his companion, as they slowly eased up on the helm.

"'Tain't the skipper's, for he's drunk as a biled owl, and ain't stirred out of his bunk since eight bells," said the other. "It's the first mate's orders; but, I reckon, it's the Señor's idea."

"Then we ain't goin' on to Mazatlan?"

"Not this trip, I reckon," said the third mate, joining them.

"Why?"

The third mate turned and pointed to leeward. The line of coast had already sunk enough to permit the faint silhouette of a trail of smoke to define the horizon line of sky.

"Steamer goin' in, eh?"

"Yes. D'ye see — it might be too hot, in there!"

"Then the jig's up?"

"No. Suthin's to be done — north of St. Lucas. Hush!"

He made a gesture of silence, although the conversation, since he had joined them, had been carried on in a continuous whisper. A figure, evidently a passenger, had appeared on deck. One or two of the foreign-looking crew who had drawn near the group, with a certain undue and irregular familiarity, now slunk away again.

The passenger was a shrewd, exact, rectangular-looking

man, who had evidently never entirely succumbed to the freedom of the sea either in his appearance or habits. He had not even his sea legs yet; and as the barque, with the full swell of the Pacific now on her weather bow, was plunging uncomfortably, he was fain to cling to the stanchions. This did not, however, prevent him from noticing the change in her position, and captiously resenting it.

"Look here—you; I say! What have we turned round for? We're going away from the land! Ain't we going on to Mazatlan?"

The two men at the wheel looked silently forward, with that exasperating unconcern of any landsman's interest peculiar to marine officials. The passenger turned impatiently to the third mate.

"But this ain't right, you know. It was understood that we were going into Mazatlan. I've got business there."

"My orders, sir," said the mate curtly, turning away.

The practical passenger had been observant enough of sea-going rules to recognize that this reason was final, and that it was equally futile to demand an interview with the captain when that gentleman was not visibly on duty. He turned angrily to the cabin again.

"You look disturbed, my dear Banks. I trust you have n't slept badly," said a very gentle voice from the quarter-rail near him; "or, perhaps, the ship's going about has upset you. It's a little rougher on this tack."

"That's just it," returned Banks sharply. "We *have* gone about, and we're not going into Mazatlan at all. It's scandalous! I'll speak to the captain—I'll complain to the consignees—I've got business at Mazatlan—I expect letters—I"—

"Business, my dear fellow?" continued the voice, in gentle protest. "You'll have time for business when

you get to San Francisco. And as for letters — they'll follow you there soon enough. Come over here, my boy, and say hail and farewell to the Mexican coast — to the land of Montezuma and Pizarro. Come here and see the mountain range from which Balboa feasted his eyes on the broad Pacific. Come!"

The speaker, though apparently more at his ease at sea, was in dress and appearance fully as unnautical as Banks. As he leaned over the railing, his white, close-fitting trousers and small patent-leather boots gave him a jaunty, half-military air, which continued up to the second button of his black frock-coat, and then so utterly changed its character that it was doubtful if a greater contrast could be conceived than that offered by the widely spread lapels of his coat, his low turned-down collar, loosely knotted silk handkerchief, and the round, smooth-shaven, gentle, pacific face above them. His straight long black hair, shining as if from recent immersion, was tucked carefully behind his ears, and hung in a heavy, even, semicircular fringe around the back of his neck where his tall hat usually rested, as if to leave his forehead meekly exposed to celestial criticism. When he had joined the ship at Callao, his fellow-passengers, rashly trusting to the momentary suggestion of his legs on the gang-plank, had pronounced him military; meeting him later at dinner, they had regarded the mild Methodistic contour of his breast and shoulders above the table, and entertained the wild idea of asking him to evoke a blessing. To complete the confusion of his appearance, he was called "Señor" Perkins, for no other reason, apparently, than his occasional, but masterful, use of the Spanish vernacular.

Steadying himself by one of the quarter stanchions, he waved his right hand oratorically towards the sinking coast.

"Look at it, sir. One of the finest countries that ever came from the hand of the Creator; a land overflowing with milk and honey; containing, sir, in that one mountain range, the products of the three zones — and yet the abode of the oppressed and down-trodden; the land of faction, superstition, tyranny, and political revolution."

"That's all very well," said Banks irritably, "but Mazatlan is a well-known commercial port, and has English and American correspondents. There's a branch of that Boston firm — Potter, Potts & Potter — there. The new line of steamers is going to stop there regularly."

Señor Perkins' soft black eyes fell for an instant, as if accidentally, on the third mate, but the next moment he laughed, and, throwing back his head, inhaled, with evident relish, a long breath of the sharp, salt air.

"Ah!" he said enthusiastically, "*that's* better than all the business you can pick up along a malarious coast. Open your mouth and try to take in the free breath of the glorious North Pacific. Ah! is n't it glorious?"

"Where's the captain?" said Banks, with despairing irritation. "I want to see him."

"The captain," said Señor Perkins, with a bland, forgiving smile and a slight lowering of his voice, "is, I fear, suffering from an accident of hospitality, and keeps his state-room. The captain is a good fellow," continued Perkins, with gentle enthusiasm; "a good sailor and careful navigator, and exceedingly attentive to his passengers. I shall certainly propose getting up some testimonial for him."

"But if he's shut up in his state-room, who's giving the orders?" began Banks angrily.

Señor Perkins put up a small, well-kept hand deprecatingly.

"Really, my dear boy, I suppose the captain cannot be

omnipresent. Some discretion must be left to the other officers. They probably know his ideas and what is to be done better than we do. You business men trouble yourselves too much about these things. You should take them more philosophically. For my part I always confide myself trustingly to these people. I enter a ship or railroad car with perfect faith. I say to myself, 'This captain, or this conductor, is a responsible man, selected with a view to my safety and comfort; he understands how to procure that safety and that comfort better than I do. He worries himself; he spends hours and nights of vigil to look after me and carry me to my destination. Why should I worry myself, who can only assist him by passive obedience? Why'—” But here he was interrupted by a headlong plunge of the *Excelsior*, a feminine shriek that was half a laugh, the rapid patter of small feet and sweep of flying skirts down the slanting deck, and the sudden and violent contact of a pretty figure.

The next moment he had forgotten his philosophy, and his companion his business. Both flew to the assistance of the fair intruder, who, albeit the least injured of the trio, clung breathlessly to the bulwarks.

“Miss Keene!” ejaculated both gentlemen.

“Oh dear! I beg your pardon,” said the young lady, reddening, with a naive mingling of hilarity and embarrassment. “But it seemed so stuffy in the cabin, and it seemed so easy to get out on deck and pull myself up by the railings; and just as I got up here, I suddenly seemed to be sliding down the roof of a house.”

“And now that you’re here, your courage should be rewarded,” said the Señor, gallantly assisting her to a settee, which he lashed securely. “You are perfectly safe now,” he added, holding the end of the rope in his hand to allow a slight sliding movement of the seat as the vessel rolled. “And here is a glorious spectacle for you. Look! the sun is just rising.”

The young girl glanced over the vast expanse before her with sparkling eyes and a suddenly awakened fancy that checked her embarrassed smile, and fixed her pretty, parted lips with wonder. The level rays of the rising sun striking the white crests of the lifted waves had suffused the whole ocean with a pinkish opal color: the darker parts of each wave seemed broken into facets instead of curves, and glittered sharply. The sea seemed to have lost its fluidity, and become vitreous; so much so, that it was difficult to believe that the waves which splintered across the Excelsior's bow did not fall upon her deck with the ring of shattered glass.

"Sindbad's Valley of Diamonds!" said the young girl, in an awed whisper.

"It's a cross sea in the Gulf of California, so the mate says," said Banks practically; "but I don't see why we" . . .

"The Gulf of California?" repeated the young girl, while a slight shade of disappointment passed over her bright face; "are we then so near" —

"Not the California you mean, my dear young lady," broke in Señor Perkins, "but the old peninsula of California, which is still a part of Mexico. It terminates in Cape St. Lucas, a hundred miles from here, but it's still a far cry to San Francisco, which is in Upper California. But I fancy you don't seem as anxious as our friend Mr. Banks to get to your journey's end," he added, with paternal blandness.

The look of relief which had passed over Miss Keene's truthful face gave way to one of slight embarrassment.

"It has n't seemed long," she said hastily; and then added, as if to turn the conversation, "What is this peninsula? I remember it on our map at school."

"It's not of much account," interrupted Banks positively. "There ain't a place on it you ever heard of. It's a kind of wilderness."

"I differ from you," said Señor Perkins gravely. "There are, I have been told, some old Mexican settlements along the coast, and there is no reason why the country should n't be fruitful. But you may have a chance to judge for yourself," he continued beamingly. "Since we are not going into Mazatlan, we may drop in at some of those places for water. It's all on our way, and we shall save the three days we would have lost had we touched Mazatlan. That," he added, answering an impatient interrogation in Banks' eye, "at least, is the captain's idea, I reckon." He laughed, and went on still gayly, — "But what's the use of anticipating? Why should we spoil any little surprise that our gallant captain may have in store for us? I've been trying to convert this business man to my easy philosophy, Miss Keene, but he is incorrigible; he is actually lamenting his lost chance of hearing the latest news at Mazatlan, and getting the latest market quotations, instead of offering a thanksgiving for another uninterrupted day of freedom in this glorious air."

With a half humorous extravagance he unloosed his already loose necktie, turned his Byron collar still lower, and squared his shoulders ostentatiously to the sea breeze. Accustomed as his two companions were to his habitually extravagant speech, it did not at that moment seem inconsistent with the intoxicating morning air and the exhilaration of sky and wave. A breath of awakening and resurrection moved over the face of the waters; recreation and new-born life sparkled everywhere; the past night seemed forever buried in the vast and exundating sea. The reefs had been shaken out, and every sail set to catch the steadier breeze of the day; and as the quickening sun shone upon the dazzling canvas that seemed to envelop them, they felt as if wrapped in the purity of a baptismal robe.

Nevertheless, Miss Keene's eyes occasionally wandered from the charming prospect towards the companion-ladder. Presently she became ominously and ostentatiously interested in the view again, and at the same moment a young man's head and shoulders appeared above the companion-way. With a bound he was on the slanting deck, moving with the agility and adaptability of youth, and approached the group. He was quite surprised to find Miss Keene there so early, and Miss Keene was equally surprised at his appearance, notwithstanding the phenomenon had occurred with singular regularity for the last three weeks. The two spectators of this gentle comedy received it as they had often received it before, with a mixture of apparent astonishment and patronizing unconsciousness, and, after a decent interval, moved away together, leaving the young people alone.

The hesitancy and awkwardness which usually followed the first moments of their charming isolation were this morning more than usually prolonged.

"It seems we are not going into Mazatlan, after all," said Miss Keene at last, without lifting her conscious eyes from the sea.

"No," returned the young fellow quickly. "I heard all about it down below, and we had quite an indignation meeting over it. I believe Mrs. Markham wanted to head a deputation to wait upon the captain in his berth. It seems that the first officer, or whosoever is running the ship, has concluded we've lost too much time already, and we're going to strike a bee-line for Cape St. Lucas, and give Mazatlan the go-by. We'll save four days by it. I suppose it don't make any difference to you, Miss Keene, does it?"

"I? Oh, no!" said the girl hastily.

"I'm rather sorry," he said hesitatingly.

"Indeed. Are you tired of the ship?" she asked saucily.

"No," he replied bluntly; "but it would have given us four more days together—four more days before we separated."

He stopped, with a heightened color. There was a moment of silence, and the voices of Señor Perkins and Mr. Banks in political discussion on the other side of the deck came faintly. Miss Keene laughed.

"We are a long way from San Francisco yet, and you may think differently."

"Never!" he said, impulsively.

He had drawn closer to her, as if to emphasize his speech. She cast a quick glance across the deck towards the two disputants, and drew herself gently away.

"Do you know," she said suddenly, with a charming smile which robbed the act of its sting, "I sometimes wonder if I am *really* going to San Francisco. I don't know how it is; but, somehow, I never can *see* myself there."

"I wish you did, for *I'm* going there," he replied boldly.

Without appearing to notice the significance of his speech, she continued gravely:

"I have been so strongly impressed with this feeling at times that it makes me quite superstitious. When we had that terrible storm after we left Callao, I thought it meant that—that we were all going down, and we should never be heard of again."

"As long as we all went together," he said, "I don't know that it would be the worst thing that could happen. I remember that storm, Miss Keene. And I remember"—He stopped timidly.

"What?" she replied, raising her smiling eyes for the first time to his earnest face.

"I remember sitting up all night near your state-room, with a cork jacket and lots of things I'd fixed up for you,

and thinking I'd die before I trusted you alone in the boat to those rascally Lascars of the crew."

"But how would you have prevented it?" asked Miss Keene, with a compassionate and half-maternal amusement.

"I don't know exactly," he said, coloring; "but I'd have lashed you to some spar, or made a raft, and got you ashore on some island."

"And poor Mrs. Markham and Mrs. Brimmer — you'd have left them to the boats and the Lascars, I suppose?" smiled Miss Keene.

"Oh, somebody would have looked after Mrs. Markham; and Mrs. Brimmer would n't have gone with anybody that was n't well connected. But what's the use of talking?" he added ruefully. "Nothing has happened, and nothing is going to happen. You will see yourself in San Francisco, even if you don't see *me* there. You're going to a rich brother, Miss Keene, who has friends of his own, and who won't care to know a poor fellow whom you tolerated on the passage, but who don't move in Mrs. Brimmer's set, and whom Mr. Banks would n't in-dorse commercially."

"Ah, you don't know my brother, Mr. Brace."

"Nor do you, very well, Miss Keene. You were saying, only last night, you hardly remembered him."

The young girl sighed.

"I was very young when he went West," she said explanatorily; "but I dare say I shall recall him. What I meant is, that he will be very glad to know that I have been so happy here, and he will like all those who have made me so."

"Then you have been happy?"

"Yes; very." She had withdrawn her eyes, and was looking vaguely towards the companion-way. "Everybody has been so kind to me."

"And you are grateful to all?"

"Yes."

"Equally?"

The ship gave a sudden forward plunge. Miss Keene involuntarily clutched the air with her little hand, that had been resting on the settee between them, and the young man caught it in his own.

"Equally?" he repeated, with an assumed playfulness that half veiled his anxiety. "Equally — from the beaming Señor Perkins, who smiles on all, to the gloomy Mr. Hurlstone, who smiles on no one?"

She quickly withdrew her hand, and rose. "I smell the breakfast," she said laughingly. "Don't be horrified, Mr. Brace, but I'm very hungry." She laid the hand she had withdrawn lightly on his arm. "Now help me down to the cabin."

CHAPTER II.

ANOTHER PORTENT.

THE saloon of the *Excelsior* was spacious for the size of the vessel, and was furnished in a style superior to most passenger-ships of that epoch. The sun was shining through the sliding windows upon the fresh and neatly arranged breakfast-table, but the presence of the ominous "storm-racks," and partitions for glass and china, and the absence of the more delicate passengers, still testified to the potency of the Gulf of California. Even those present wore an air of fatigued discontent, and the conversation had that jerky interjectional quality which belonged to people with a common grievance, but a different individual experience. Mr. Winslow had been unable to shave. Mrs. Markham, incautiously and surreptitiously opening a port-hole in her state-room for a whiff of fresh air while dressing, had been shocked by the intrusion of the Pacific Ocean, and was obliged to summon assistance and change her dress. Jack Crosby, who had attired himself for tropical shore-going in white ducks and patent leathers, shivered in the keen north-west Trades, and bewailed the cheap cigars he had expected to buy at Mazatlan. The entrance of Miss Keene, who seemed to bring with her the freshness and purity of the dazzling outer air, stirred the younger men into some gallant attention, embarrassed, however, by a sense of self-reproach.

Señor Perkins alone retained his normal serenity. Already seated at the table between the two fair-headed

children of Mrs. Brimmer, he was benevolently performing parental duties in her absence, and gently supervising and preparing their victuals even while he carried on an ethnological and political discussion with Mrs. Markham.

"Ah, my dear lady," continued the Señor, as he spread a hot biscuit with butter and currant jelly for the youngest Miss Brimmer, "I am afraid that, with the fastidiousness of your sex, you allow your refined instincts against a race who only mix with ours in a menial capacity to prejudice your views of their ability for enlightened self-government. That may be true of the aborigines of the Old World — like our friends the Lascars among the crew" —

"They're so snaky, dark, and deceitful-looking," interrupted Mrs. Markham.

"I might differ from you there, and say that the higher blonde types like the Anglo-Saxon — to say nothing of the wily Greeks — were the deceitful races: it might be difficult for any of us to say what a sly and deceitful man should be like" —

"Oor not detheitful — oor a dood man," interpolated the youngest Miss Brimmer, fondly regarding the biscuit.

"Thank you, Missie," beamed the Señor; "but to return: our Lascar friends, Mrs. Markham, belong to an earlier Asiatic type of civilization already decayed or relapsed to barbarism, while the aborigines of the New World now existing have never known it — or, like the Aztecs, have perished with it. The modern North American aborigine has not yet got beyond the tribal condition; mingled with Caucasian blood as he is in Mexico and Central America, he is perfectly capable of self-government."

"Then why has he never obtained it?" asked Mrs. Markham.

"He has always been oppressed and kept down by colonists of the Latin races ; he has been little better than a slave to his oppressor for the last two centuries," said Señor Perkins, with a slight darkening of his soft eyes.

"Injins is pizen," whispered Mr. Winslow to Miss Keene.

"Who would be free, you know, the poet says, ought themselves to light out from the shoulder, and all that sort of thing," suggested Crosby, with cheerful vagueness.

"True ; but a little assistance and encouragement from mankind generally would help them," continued the Señor. "Ah ! my dear Mrs. Markham, if they could even count on the intelligent sympathy of women like yourself, their independence would be assured. And think what a proud privilege to have contributed to such a result, to have assisted at the birth of the ideal American Republic, for such it would be — a Republic of one blood, one faith, one history."

"What on earth, or sea, ever set the old man off again ?" inquired Crosby, in an aggrieved whisper. "It's two weeks since he's given us any Central American independent flapdoodle — long enough for those nigger injins to have had half a dozen revolutions. You know that the vessels that put into San Juan have saluted one flag in the morning, and have been fired at under another in the afternoon."

"Hush !" said Miss Keene. "He's so kind ! Look at him now, taking off the pinafores of those children and tidying them. He is kinder to them than their nurse, and more judicious than their mother. And half his talk with Mrs. Markham now is only to please her, because she thinks she knows politics. He's always trying to do good to somebody."

"That's so," exclaimed Brace, eager to share Miss

Keene's sentiments ; "and he's so good to those outlandish niggers in the crew. I don't see how the captain could get on with the crew without him ; he's the only one who can talk their gibberish and keep them quiet. I've seen him myself quietly drop down among them when they were wrangling. In my opinion," continued the young fellow, lowering his voice somewhat ostentatiously, "you'll find out when we get to port that he's stopped the beginning of many a mutiny among them."

"I reckon they'd make short work of a man like him," said Winslow, whose superciliousness was by no means lessened by the community of sentiment between Miss Keene and Brace. "I reckon his political reforms, and his poetical high-falutin' would n't go as far in the fore-castle among live men as it does in the cabin with a lot of women. You'll more likely find that he's been some sort of steward on a steamer, and he's working his passage with us. That's where he gets that smooth, equally-attentive-to-anybody sort of style. The way he skirmished around Mrs. Brimmer and Mrs. Markham with a basin the other day when it was so rough convinced *me*. It was a little too professional to suit my style."

"I suppose that was the reason why you went below so suddenly," rejoined Brace, whose too sensitive blood was beginning to burn in his cheeks and eyes.

"It's a shame to stay below this morning," said Miss Keene, instinctively recognizing the cause of the discord and its remedy. "I'm going on deck again — if I can manage to get there."

The three gentlemen sprang to accompany her ; and, in their efforts to keep their physical balance and hers equally, the social equilibrium was restored.

By noon, however, the heavy cross-sea had abated, and the *Excelsior* bore west. When she once more rose and fell regularly on the long rhythmical swell of the Pacific,

most of the passengers regained the deck. Even Mrs. Brimmer and Miss Chubb ventured from their state-rooms, and were conveyed to and installed in some state on a temporary divan of cushions and shawls on the lee side. For even in this small republic of equal cabin passengers the undemocratic and distinction-loving sex had managed to create a sham exclusiveness. Mrs. Brimmer, as the daughter of a rich Bostonian, the sister of a prominent lawyer, and the wife of a successful San Francisco merchant, who was popularly supposed to be part-owner of the *Excelsior*, was recognized, and alternately caressed and hated as their superior. A majority of the male passengers, owning no actual or prospective matrimonial subjection to those charming toad-eaters, I am afraid continued to enjoy a mild and debasing equality among themselves, mitigated only by the concessions of occasional gallantry. To them, Mrs. Brimmer was a rather pretty, refined, well-dressed woman, whose languid pallor, aristocratic sparseness, and utter fastidiousness did not, however, preclude a certain nervous intensity which occasionally lit up her weary eyes with a dangerous phosphorescence, under their brown fringes. Equally acceptable was Miss Chubb, her friend and traveling companion; a tall, well-bred girl, with faint salmon-pink hair and complexion, that darkened to a fiery brown in her short-sighted eyes.

Between these ladies and Mrs. Markham and Miss Keene existed an enthusiastic tolerance, which, however, could never be mistaken for a generous rivalry. Of the greater popularity of Miss Keene as the recognized belle of the *Excelsior* there could be no question; nor was there any from Mrs. Brimmer and her friend. The intellectual preëminence of Mrs. Markham was equally, and no less ostentatiously, granted. "Mrs. Markham is so clever; I delight to hear you converse together," Mrs.

Brimmer would say to Señor Perkins, "though I'm sure I hardly dare talk to her myself. She might easily go into the lecture-field — perhaps she expects to do so in California. My dear Clarissa" — to Miss Chubb — "don't she remind you a little of Aunt Jane Winthrop's governess, whom we came so near taking to Paris with us, but could n't on account of her defective French?"

When "The Excelsior Banner and South Sea Bubble" was published in lat. 15 N. and long. 105 W., to which Mrs. Markham contributed the editorials and essays, and Señor Perkins three columns of sentimental poetry, Mrs. Brimmer did not withhold her praise of the fair editor. When the Excelsior "Recrossed the Line," with a suitable tableau vivant and pageant, and Miss Keene as California, in white and blue, welcomed from the hands of Neptune (Señor Perkins) and Amphitrite (Mrs. Markham) her fair sister, Massachusetts (Mrs. Brimmer), and New York (Miss Chubb), Mrs. Brimmer was most enthusiastic of the beauty of Miss Keene.

On the present morning Mr. Banks found his disappointment at not going into Mazatlan languidly shared by Mrs. Brimmer. That lady even made a place for him on the cushions beside her, as she pensively expressed her belief that her husband would be still more disappointed.

"Mr. Brimmer, you know, has correspondents at Mazatlan, and no doubt he has made particular arrangements for our reception and entertainment while there. I should not wonder if he was very indignant. And if, as I fear, the officials of the place, knowing Mr. Brimmer's position — and my own connections — have prepared to show us social courtesies, it may be a graver affair. I should n't be surprised if our Government were obliged to take notice of it. There is a Captain-General of port — is n't there? I think my husband spoke of him."

"Oh, he's probably been shot long ago," broke in Mr. Crosby cheerfully. "They put in a new man every revolution. If the wrong party's got in, they've likely shipped your husband's correspondent too, and might be waiting to get a reception for you with nigger soldiers and ball cartridges. Should n't wonder if the skipper got wind of something of the kind, and that's why he did n't put in. If your husband had n't been so well known, you see, we might have slipped in all right."

Mrs. Brimmer received this speech with the languid obliviousness of perception she usually meted out to this chartered jester.

"Do you really think so, Mr. Crosby? And would you have been afraid to leave your cabin — or are you joking? You know I never know when you are. It is very dreadful, either way."

But here Miss Chubb, with ready tact, interrupted any possible retort from Mr. Crosby.

"Look," she said, pointing to some of the other passengers, who, at a little distance, had grouped about the first mate in animated discussion. "I wonder what those gentlemen are so interested about. Do go and see."

Before he could reply, Mr. Winslow, detaching himself from the group, hurried towards them.

"Here's a row: Hurlstone is missing! Can't be found anywhere! They think he's fallen overboard!"

The two frightened exclamations from Miss Chubb and Mrs. Brimmer diverted attention from the sudden paleness of Miss Keene, who had impulsively approached them.

"Impossible!" she said hurriedly.

"I fear it is so," said Brace, who had followed Winslow; "although," he added in a lower tone, with an angry glance at the latter, "that brute need not have blustered it out to frighten everybody. They're search-

ing the ship again, but there seems no hope. He has n't been seen since last night. He was supposed to be in his state-room — but as nobody missed him — you know how odd and reserved he was — it was only when the steward could n't find him, and began to inquire, that everybody remembered they had n't seen him all day. You are frightened, Miss Keene; pray sit down. That fellow Winslow ought to have had more sense."

"It seems so horrible that nobody knew it," said the young girl, shuddering; "that we sat here laughing and talking, while perhaps he was — Good heavens! what's that?"

A gruff order had been given: in the bustle that ensued the ship began to fall off to leeward; a number of the crew had sprung to the davits of the quarter boat.

"We're going about, and they're lowering a boat, that's all; but it's as good as hopeless," said Brace. "The accident must have happened before daylight, or it would have been seen by the watch. It was probably long before we came on deck," he added gently; "so comfort yourself, Miss Keene, you could have seen nothing."

"It seems so dreadful," murmured the young girl, "that he was n't even missed. Why," she said, suddenly raising her soft eyes to Brace, "*you* must have noticed his absence; why, even I" — She stopped with a slight confusion, that was, however, luckily diverted by the irrepressible Winslow.

"The skipper's been routed out at last, and is giving orders. He don't look as if his hat fitted him any too comfortably this morning, does he?" he laughed, as a stout, grizzled man, with congested face and eyes, and a peremptory voice husky with alcoholic irritation, suddenly appeared among the group by the wheel. "I reckon he's cursing his luck at having to heave-to and lose this wind."

"But for a human creature's life!" exclaimed Mrs. Markham in horror.

"That's just it. Laying-to now ain't going to save anybody's life, and he knows it. He's doin' it for show, just for a clean record in the log, and to satisfy you people here, who'd kick up a row if he did n't."

"Then you believe he's lost?" said Miss Keene, with glistening eyes.

"There ain't a doubt of it," returned Winslow shortly.

"I don't agree with you," said a gentle voice.

They turned quickly towards the benevolent face of Señor Perkins, who had just joined them.

"I differ from my young friend," continued the Señor courteously, "because the accident must have happened at about daybreak, when we were close inshore. It would not be impossible for a good swimmer to reach the land, or even," continued Señor Perkins, in answer to the ray of hope that gleamed in Miss Keene's soft eyes, "for him to have been picked up by some passing vessel. The smoke of a large steamer was sighted between us and the land at about that time."

"A steamer!" ejaculated Banks eagerly; "that was one of the new line with the mails. How provoking!"

He was thinking of his lost letters. Miss Keene turned, heart-sick, away. Worse than the ghastly interruption to their easy idyllic life was this grim revelation of selfishness. She began to doubt if even the hysterical excitement of her sister passengers was not merely a pleasant titillation of their bored and inactive nerves.

"I believe the Señor is right, Miss Keene," said Brace, taking her aside, "and I'll tell you why." He stopped, looked around him, and went on in a lower voice,—"There are some circumstances about the affair which look more like deliberation than an accident. He has left nothing behind him of any value or that gives any

clue. If it was a suicide he would have left some letter behind for somebody — people always do, you know, at such times — and he would have chosen the open sea. It seems more probable that he threw himself overboard with the intention of reaching the shore."

"But why should he want to leave the ship?" echoed the young girl simply.

"Perhaps he found out that we were *not* going to Mazatlan, and this was his only chance; it must have happened just as the ship went about and stood off from shore again."

"But I don't understand," continued Miss Keene, with a pretty knitting of her brows, "why he should be so dreadfully anxious to get ashore now."

The young fellow looked at her with the superior smile of youthful sagacity.

"Suppose he had particular reasons for not going to San Francisco, where our laws could reach him! Suppose he had committed some offense! Suppose he was afraid of being questioned or recognized!"

The young girl rose indignantly.

"This is really too shameful! Who dare talk like that?"

Brace colored quickly.

"Who? Why, everybody," he stammered, for a moment abandoning his attitude of individual acumen; "it's the talk of the ship."

"Is it? And before they know whether he's alive or dead — perhaps even while he is still struggling with death — all they can do is to take his character away!" she repeated, with flashing eyes.

"And I'm even worse than they are," he returned, his temper rising with his color. "I ought to have known I was talking to one of *his* friends, instead of one whom I thought was *mine*. I beg your pardon."

He turned away as Miss Keene, apparently not heeding his pique, crossed the deck, and entered into conversation with Mrs. Markham.

It is to be feared that she found little consolation among the other passengers, or even those of her own sex, whom this profound event had united in a certain freemasonry of sympathy and interest—to the exclusion of their former cliques. She soon learned, as the return of the boats to the ship and the ship to her course might have clearly told her, that there was no chance of recovering the missing passenger. She learned that the theory advanced by Brace was the one generally held by them; but with an added romance of detail, that excited at once their commiseration and admiration. Mrs. Brimmer remembered to have heard him, the second or third night out from Callao, groaning in his state-room; but having mistakenly referred the emotion to ordinary seasickness, she had no doubt lost an opportunity for confidential disclosure. “I am sure,” she added, “that had somebody as resolute and practical as you, dear Mrs. Markham, approached him the next day, he would have revealed his sorrow.” Miss Chubb was quite certain that she had seen him one night, in tears, by the quarter railing. “I saw his eyes glistening under his slouched hat as I passed. I remember thinking, at the time, that he oughtn’t to have been left alone with such a dreadful temptation before him to slip overboard and end his sorrow or his crime.” Mrs. Markham also remembered that it was about five o’clock—or was it six?—that morning when she distinctly thought she had heard a splash, and she was almost impelled to get up and look out of the bull’s-eye. She should never forgive herself for resisting that impulse, for she was positive now that she would have seen his ghastly face in the water. Some indignation was felt that the captain, after a cursory survey of his state-

room, had ordered it to be locked until his fate was more positively known, and the usual seals placed on his effects for their delivery to the authorities at San Francisco. It was believed that some clue to his secret would be found among his personal chattels, if only in the form of a keepsake, a locket, or a bit of jewelry. Miss Chubb had noticed that he wore a seal ring, but not on the engagement-finger. In some vague feminine way it was admitted without discussion that one of their own sex was mixed up in the affair, and, with the exception of Miss Keene, general credence was given to the theory that Mazatlan contained his loadstar — the fatal partner and accomplice of his crime, the siren that allured him to his watery grave. I regret to say that the facts gathered by the gentlemen were equally ineffective. The steward who had attended the missing man was obliged to confess that their most protracted and confidential conversation had been on the comparative efficiency of ship biscuits and soda crackers. Mr. Banks, who was known to have spoken to him, could only remember that one warm evening, in reply to a casual remark about the weather, the missing man, burying his ears further in the turned-up collar of his pea-jacket, had stated, “‘It was cold enough to freeze the ears off a brass monkey,’—a remark, no doubt, sir, intended to convey a reason for his hiding his own.” Only Señor Perkins retained his serene optimism unimpaired.

“Take my word for it, we shall yet hear good news of our missing friend. Let us at least believe it until we know otherwise. Ah! my dear Mrs. Markham, why should the Unknown always fill us with apprehension? Its surprises are equally often agreeable.”

“But we have all been so happy before this; and this seems such an unnecessary and cruel awakening,” said Miss Keene, lifting her sad eyes to the speaker, “that

I can't help thinking it's the beginning of the end. Good heavens ! what's that ? ”

She had started at the dark figure of one of the foreign-looking sailors, who seemed to have suddenly risen out of the deck beside them.

“ The Señor Perkins,” he said, with an apologetic gesture of his hand to his hatless head.

“ You want *me*, my good man ? ” asked Señor Perkins paternally.

“ Si, Señor ; the mate wishes to see the Patrono,” he said in Spanish.

“ I will come presently.”

The sailor hesitated. Señor Perkins took a step nearer to him benignantly. The man raised his eyes to Señor Perkins, and said, —

“ Vigilancia.”

“ Bueno ! ” returned the Señor gently. “ Excuse me, ladies, for a moment.”

“ Perhaps it is some news of poor Mr. Hurlstone ? ” said Miss Keene, with an instinctive girlish movement of hope.

“ Who knows ? ” returned Señor Perkins, waving his hand as he gayly tripped after his guide. “ Let us believe in the best, dear young lady, the best ! ”

CHAPTER III.

"VIGILANCIA."

WITHOUT exchanging another word with his escort, Señor Perkins followed him to the main hatch, where they descended and groped their way through the half obscurity of the lower deck. Here they passed one or two shadows, that, recognizing the Señor, seemed to draw aside in a half awed, half suppressed shyness, as of caged animals in the presence of their trainer. At the fore-hatch they again descended, passing a figure that appeared to be keeping watch at the foot of the ladder, and almost instantly came upon a group lit up by the glare of a bull's-eye lantern. It was composed of the first and second mate, a vicious-looking Peruvian sailor with a bandaged head, and, to the Señor's astonishment, the missing passenger Hurlstone, seated on the deck, heavily ironed.

"Tell him what you know, Pedro," said the first mate to the Peruvian sailor curtly.

"It was just daybreak, Patrono, before we put about," began the man in Spanish, "that I thought I saw some one gliding along towards the fore-hatch; but I lost sight of him. After we had tumbled up to go on the other tack, I heard a noise in the fore-hold. I went down and found *him*," pointing to Hurlstone, "hiding there. He had some provisions stowed away beside him, and that package. I grabbed him, Patrono. He broke away and struck me here" — he pointed to his still wet bandage — "and would have got out overboard through the port, but

the second mate heard the row and came down just in time to stop him."

"When was this?" asked Señor Perkins.

"*Guardia di Diana.*"

"You were chattering, you fellows."

"*Quien sabe?*" said the Peruvian, lifting his shoulders.

"How does he explain himself?"

"He refuses to speak."

"Take off his irons," said Señor Perkins, in English.

"But" — expostulated the first mate, with a warning gesture.

"I said — take off his irons," repeated Señor Perkins in a dry and unfamiliar voice.

The two mates released the shackles. The prisoner raised his eyes to Señor Perkins. He was a slightly built man of about thirty, fair-haired and hollow-cheeked. His short upper lip was lifted over his teeth, as if from hurried or labored breathing; but his features were regular and determined, and his large blue eyes shone with a strange abstraction of courage and fatuity.

"That will do," continued the Señor, in the same tone. "Now leave him with me."

The two mates looked at each other, and hesitated; but at a glance from Perkins, turned, and ascended the ladder again. The Peruvian alone remained.

"Go!" said the Señor sharply.

The man cast a vindictive look at the prisoner and retreated sullenly.

"Did *he* tell you," said the prisoner, looking after the sailor grimly, "that I tried to bribe him to let me go, but that I could n't reach his figure? He wanted too much. He thought I had some stolen money or valuables here," he added, with a bitter laugh, pointing to the package that lay beside him.

"And you had n't?" said Perkins shortly.

"No."

"I believe you. And now, my young friend," said Perkins, with a singular return of his beaming gentleness, "since those two efficient and competent officers and this energetic but discourteous seaman are gone, would you mind telling me *what* you were hiding for?"

The prisoner raised his eyes on his questioner. For the last three weeks he had lived in the small community of which the Señor was a prominent member, but he scarcely recognized him now.

"What if I refuse?" he said.

The Señor shrugged his shoulders.

"Those two excellent men would feel it their duty to bring the Peruvian to the captain, and I should be called to interpret to him."

"And I should throw myself overboard the first chance I got. I would have done so ten minutes ago, but the mate stopped me."

His eye glistened with the same fatuous determination he had shown at first. There was no doubt he would do as he said.

"I believe you would," said the Señor benevolently; "but I see no present necessity for that, nor for any trouble whatever, if you will kindly tell me *what* I am to say."

The young man's eyes fell.

"I *did* try to conceal myself in the hold," he said bluntly. "I intended to remain there hidden while the ship was at Mazatlan. I did not know until now that the vessel had changed her course."

"And how did you believe your absence would be accounted for?" asked the Señor blandly.

"I thought it would be supposed that I had fallen overboard before we entered Mazatlan."

"So that anybody seeking you there would not find you, and you would be believed to be dead?"

"Yes." He raised his eyes quickly to Señor Perkins again. "I am neither a thief nor a murderer," he said almost savagely, "but I do not choose to be recognized by any one who knows me on this side of the grave."

Señor Perkins' eyes sought his, and for an instant seemed to burn through the singular, fatuous mist that veiled them.

"My friend," he said cheerfully, after a moment's pause, "you have just had a providential escape. I repeat it — a most providential escape. Indeed, if I were inclined to prophesy, I would say you were a man reserved for some special good fortune."

The prisoner stared at him with angry amazement.

"You are a confirmed somnambulist. Excuse me," continued the Señor, with a soft, deprecating gesture; "you are, of course, unaware of it — most victims of that singular complaint are, or at least fail to recognize the extent of their aberration. In your case it has only been indicated by a profound melancholy and natural shunning of society. In a paroxysm of your disorder, you rise in the night, fully dress yourself, and glide as unconsciously along the deck in pursuance of some vague fancy. You pass the honest but energetic sailor who has just left us, who thinks you are a phantom, and fails to give the alarm; you are precipitated by a lurch of the ship through an open hatchway: the shock renders you insensible until you are discovered and restored."

"And who will believe this pretty story?" said the young man scornfully.

"The honest sailor who picked you up, who has related it in his own picturesque tongue to *me*, who will in turn interpret it to the captain and the other passengers," replied Señor Perkins blandly.

"And what of the two mates who were here?" said the prisoner hesitatingly.

"They are two competent officers, who are quite content to carry out the orders of their superiors, and who understand their duty too well to interfere with the reports of their subordinates, on which these orders are based. Mr. Brooks, the first officer, though fairly intelligent and a good reader of history, is only imperfectly acquainted with the languages, and Mr. M'Carthy's knowledge of Spanish is confined to a few objurgations which generally preclude extended conversation."

"And who are you," said Hurlstone, more calmly, "who are willing to do this for a stranger?"

"A friend — equally of yours, the captain's, and the other passengers'," replied Señor Perkins pleasantly. "A man who believes you, my dear sir, and, even if he did not, sees no reason to interrupt the harmony that has obtained in our little community during our delightful passage. Were any scandal to occur, were you to carry out your idea of throwing yourself overboard, it would, to say nothing of my personal regret, produce a discord for which there is no necessity, and from which no personal good can be derived. Here at least your secret is secure, for even *I* do not ask what it is; we meet here on an equality, based on our own conduct and courtesy to each other, limited by no antecedent prejudice, and restrained by no thought of the future. In a little while we shall be separated — why should it not be as friends? Why should we not look back upon our little world of this ship as a happy one?"

Hurlstone gazed at the speaker with a troubled air. It was once more the quaint benevolent figure whom he had vaguely noted among the other passengers, and as vaguely despised. He hesitated a moment, and then, half timidly, half reservedly, extended his hand.

"I thank you," he said, "at least for not asking my secret. Perhaps, if it was only"—

"Your own—you might tell it," interrupted the Señor, gayly. "I understand. I see you recognize my principle. There is no necessity of your putting yourself to that pain, or another to that risk. And now, my young friend, time presses. I must say a word to our friends above, who are waiting, and I shall see that you are taken privately to your state-room while most of the other passengers are still on deck. If you would permit yourself the weakness of allowing the steward to carry or assist you it would be better. Let me advise you that the excitement of the last three hours has not left you in your full strength. You must really give *me* the pleasure of spreading the glad tidings of your safety among the passengers, who have been so terribly alarmed."

"They will undoubtedly be relieved," said Hurlstone, with ironical bitterness.

"You wrong them," returned the Señor, with gentle reproach; "especially the ladies."

The voice of the first mate from above here checked his further speech, and, perhaps, prevented him, as he quickly reascended the upper deck, from noticing the slight embarrassment of his prisoner.

The Señor's explanations to the mate were evidently explicit and brief. In a few moments he reappeared with the steward and his assistant.

"Lean on these men," he said to Hurlstone significantly, "and do not overestimate your strength. Thank Heaven, no bones are broken, and you are only bruised by the fall. With a little rest, I think we can get along without laying the captain's medicine-chest under contribution. Our kind friend Mr. Brooks has had the lower deck cleared, so that you may gain your state-room without alarming the passengers or fatiguing yourself."

He pressed Hurlstone's hand as the latter resigned himself to the steward, and was half led, half supported, through the gloom of the lower deck. Señor Perkins remained for an instant gazing after him with even more than his usual benevolence. Suddenly his arm was touched almost rudely. He turned, and encountered the lowering eyes of the Peruvian sailor.

"And what is to be done for me?" said the man roughly, in Spanish.

"You?"

"Yes. Who's to pay for this?" he pointed to his bandaged head.

Without changing his bland expression, Señor Perkins apparently allowed his soft black eyes to rest, as if fondly, on the angry pupils of the Peruvian. The eyes of the latter presently sought the ground.

"My dear Yoto," said Señor Perkins softly, "I scarcely think that this question of personal damage can be referred to the State. I will, however, look into it. Meantime, let me advise you to control your enthusiasm. Too much zeal in a subordinate is even more fatal than laxity. For the rest, son, be vigilant—and peaceful. Thou hast meant well, much shall be—forgiven thee. For the present, *vamos!*"

He turned on his heel, and ascended to the upper deck. Here he found the passengers thrilling with a vague excitement. A few brief orders, a few briefer explanations, dropped by the officers, had already whetted curiosity to the keenest point. The Señor was instantly beset with interrogations. Gentle, compassionate, with well-rounded periods, he related the singular accident that had befallen Mr. Hurlstone, and his providential escape from almost certain death. "At the most, he has now only the exhaustion of the shock, from which a day of perfect rest will recover him; but," he added deprecatingly, "at present he ought not to be disturbed or excited."

The story was received by those fellow-passengers who had been strongest in their suspicions of Hurlstone's suicide or flight, with a keen sense of discomfiture, only mitigated by a humorous perception of the cause of the accident. It was agreed that a man whose ludicrous infirmity had been the cause of putting the ship out of her course, and the passengers out of their comfortable security, could not be wronged by attributing to him manlier and more criminal motives. A somnambulist on ship-board was clearly a humorous object, who might, however, become a bore. "It all accounts for his being so deuced quiet and reserved in the daytime," said Crosby facetiously; "he could n't keep it up the whole twenty-four hours. If he'd only given us a little more of his company when he was awake, he would n't have gallivanted round at night, and we'd have been thirty miles nearer port." Equal amusement was created by the humorous suggestion that the unfortunate man had never been entirely awake during the voyage, and that he would now, probably for the first time, really make the acquaintance of his fellow-voyagers. Listening to this badinage with bland tolerance, Señor Perkins no doubt felt that, for the maintenance of that perfect amity he so ardently apostrophized, it was just as well that Hurlstone was in his state-room, and out of hearing.

He would have been more satisfied, however, had he been permitted to hear the feminine comments on this incident. In the eyes of the lady passengers Mr. Hurlstone was more a hero than ever; his mysterious malady invested him with a vague and spiritual interest; his escape from the awful fate reserved to him, in their excited fancy, gave him the *éclat* of having *actually* survived it; while the supposed real incident of his fall through the hatchway lent him the additional lustre of a wounded and crippled man. That prostrate condition of active human-

ity, which so irresistibly appeals to the feminine imagination as segregating their victim from the distractions of his own sex, and, as it were, delivering him helpless into their hands, was at once their opportunity, and his. All the ladies volunteered to nurse him ; it was with difficulty that Mrs. Brimmer and Mrs. Markham, reinforced with bandages, flannels, and liniments, and supported by different theories, could be kept from the door of his state-room. Jellies, potted meats, and delicacies from their private stores appeared on trays at his bedside, to be courteously declined by the Señor Perkins, in his new functions of a benevolent type of Sancho Panza physician. To say that this pleased the gentle optimism of the Señor is unnecessary. Even while his companion writhed under the sting of this enforced compassion, the good man beamed philosophically upon him.

"Take care, or I shall end this cursed farce in my own way," said Hurlstone ominously, his eyes again filming with a vague desperation.

"My dear boy," returned the Señor gently, "reflect upon the situation. Your suffering, real or implied, produces in the hearts of these gentle creatures a sympathy which not only exalts and sustains their higher natures, but, I conscientiously believe, gratifies and pleases their lower ones. Why should you deny them this opportunity of indulging their twofold organisms, and beguiling the tedium of the voyage, merely because of some erroneous exhibition of fact?"

Later, Señor Perkins might have added to this exposition the singularly stimulating effect which Hurlstone's supposed peculiarity had upon the feminine imagination. But there were some secrets which were not imparted even to him, and it was only to each other that the ladies confided certain details and reminiscences. For it now appeared that they had all heard strange noises and

stealthy steps at night ; and Mrs. Brimmer was quite sure that on one occasion the handle of her state-room door was softly turned. Mrs. Markham also remembered distinctly that only a week before, being unable to sleep, she had ventured out into the saloon in a dressing-gown to get her diary, which she had left with a portfolio on a chair ; that she had a sudden consciousness of another presence in the saloon, although she could distinguish nothing by the dim light of the swinging lantern ; and that, after quickly returning to her room, she was quite positive she heard a door close. But the most surprising reminiscence developed by the late incident was from Mrs. Brimmer's nurse, Susan. As it, apparently, demonstrated the fact that Mr. Hurlstone not only walked but *talked* in his sleep, it possessed a more mysterious significance. It seemed that Susan was awakened one night by the sound of voices, and, opening her door softly, saw a figure which she at first supposed to be the Señor Perkins, but which she now was satisfied was poor Mr. Hurlstone. As there was no one else to be seen, the voices must have proceeded from that single figure ; and being in a strange and unknown tongue, were inexpressibly weird and awful. When pressed to remember what was said, she could only distinguish one word — a woman's name — Virgil — Vigil — no : Virginescia !

"It must have been one of those creatures at Callao, whose pictures you can buy for ten cents," said Mrs. Brimmer.

"If it is one of them, Susan must have made a mistake in the first two syllables of the name," said Mrs. Markham grimly.

"But surely, Miss Keene," said Miss Chubb, turning to that young lady, who had taken only the part of a passive listener to this colloquy, and was gazing over the railing at the sinking sun, "surely *you* can tell us

something about this poor young man. If I don't mistake, you are the only person he ever honored with his conversation."

"And only once, I think," said the young girl, slightly coloring. "He happened to be sitting next to me on deck, and I believe he spoke only out of politeness. At least, he seemed very quiet and reserved, and talked on general topics, and I thought very intelligently. I—should have thought—I mean," she continued hesitatingly—"I thought he was an educated gentleman."

"That is n't at all inconsistent with photographs or sleep-walking," said Mrs. Brimmer, with one of her vague simplicities. "Uncle Quincey brought home a whole sheaf of those women whom he said he'd met; and one of my cousins, who was educated at Heidelberg, used to walk in his sleep, as it were, all over Europe."

"Did you notice anything queer in his eyes, Miss Keene?" asked Miss Chubb vivaciously.

Miss Keene had noticed that his eyes were his best feature, albeit somewhat abstracted and melancholy; but, for some vague reason she could not explain herself, she answered hurriedly that she had seen nothing very particular in them.

"Well," said Mrs. Markham positively, "when he's able to be out again, I shall consider it my duty to look him up, and try to keep him sufficiently awake in the daytime to ensure his resting better at night."

"No one can do it, dear Mrs. Markham, better than you; and no one would think of misunderstanding your motives," said Mrs. Brimmer sweetly. "But it's getting late, and the air seems to be ever so much colder. Captain Bunker says it's because we are really nearing the Californian coast. It seems so odd! Mr. Brimmer wrote to me that it was so hot in Sacramento that you could do something with eggs in the sun—I forget what."

“Hatch them?” suggested Miss Chubb.

“I think so,” returned Mrs. Brimmer, rising. “Let us go below.”

The three ladies rustled away, but Miss Keene, throwing a wrap around her shoulders, lingered by the railing. With one little hand supporting her round chin, she leaned over the darkly heaving water. She was thinking of her brief and only interview with that lonely man whose name was now in everybody’s mouth, but who, until to-day, had been passed over by them with an unconcern equal to his own. And yet to her refined and delicately feminine taste there appeared no reason why he should not have mingled with his fellows, and have accepted the homage from them that *she* was instinctively ready to give. He seemed to her like a gentleman — and something more. In her limited but joyous knowledge of the world — a knowledge gathered in the happy school-life of an orphan who but faintly remembered and never missed a parent’s care — she knew nothing of the mysterious dominance of passion, suffering, or experience in fashioning the outward expression of men, and saw only that Mr. Hurlstone was unlike any other. That unlikeness was fascinating. He had said very little to her in that very brief period. He had not talked to her with the general gallantry which she already knew her prettiness elicited. Without knowing why, she felt there was a subtle flattery in his tacit recognition of that other self of which she, as yet, knew so little. She could not remember what they had talked about — nor why. Nor was she offended that he had never spoken to her since, nor gone beyond a grave lifting of his hat to her when he passed.

CHAPTER IV.

IN THE FOG.

By noon of the following day the coast of the Peninsula of California had been sighted to leeward. The lower temperature of the northwest Trades had driven Mrs. Brimmer and Miss Chubb into their state-rooms to consult their wardrobes in view of an impending change from the light muslins and easy languid toilets of the Tropics. That momentous question for the moment held all other topics in abeyance ; and even Mrs. Markham and Miss Keene, though they still kept the deck, in shawls and wraps, sighed over this feminine evidence of the gentle passing of their summer holiday. The gentlemen had already mounted their pea-jackets and overcoats, with the single exception of Señor Perkins, who, in chivalrous compliment to the elements, still bared his unfettered throat and forehead to the breeze. The aspect of the coast, as seen from the Excelsior's deck, seemed to bear out Mr. Banks' sweeping indictment of the day before. A few low, dome-like hills, yellow and treeless as sand dunes, scarcely raised themselves above the horizon. The air, too, appeared to have taken upon itself a dry asperity ; the sun shone with a hard, practical brilliancy. Miss Keene raised her eyes to Señor Perkins with a pretty impatience that she sometimes indulged in, as one of the privileges of accepted beauty and petted youth.

"I don't think much of your peninsula," she said poutingly. "It looks dreadfully flat and uninteresting. It

was a great deal nicer on the other coast, or even at sea."

"Perhaps you are judging hastily, my dear young friend," said Señor Perkins, with habitual tolerance. "I have heard that behind those hills, and hidden from sight in some of the cañons, are perfect little Edens of beauty and fruitfulness. They are like some ardent natures that cover their approaches with the ashes of their burnt-up fires, but only do it the better to keep intact their glowing, vivifying, central heat."

"How very poetical, Mr. Perkins!" said Mrs. Markham, with blunt admiration. "You ought to put that into verse."

"I have," returned Señor Perkins modestly. "They are some reflections on—I hardly dare call them an apostrophe to—the crater of Colima. If you will permit me to read them to you this evening, I shall be charmed. I hope also to take that opportunity of showing you the verses of a gifted woman, not yet known to fame, Mrs. Euphemia M'Corkle, of Peoria, Illinois."

Mrs. Markham coughed slightly. The gifted M'Corkle was already known to her through certain lines quoted by the Señor; and the entire cabin had one evening fled before a larger and more ambitious manuscript of the fair Illinoisian. Miss Keene, who dreaded the reappearance of this poetical phantom that seemed to haunt the Señor's fancy, could not, however, forget that she had been touched on that occasion by a kindly moisture of eye and tremulousness of voice in the reader; and, in spite of the hopeless bathos of the composition, she had forgiven him. Though she did not always understand Señor Perkins, she liked him too well to allow him to become ridiculous to others; and at the present moment she promptly interposed with a charming assumption of coquetry.

"You forget that you promised to let *me* read the manuscript first, and in private, and that you engaged to give me my revenge at chess this evening. But do as you like. You are all fast becoming faithless. I suppose it is because our holiday is drawing to a close, and we shall soon forget we ever had any, or be ashamed we ever played so long. Everybody seems to be getting nervous and fidgety and preparing for civilization again. Mr. Banks, for the last few days, has dressed himself regularly as if he were going down town to his office, and writes letters in the corner of the saloon as if it were a counting-house. Mr. Crosby and Mr. Winslow do nothing but talk of their prospects, and I believe they are drawing up articles of partnership together. Here is Mr. Brace frightening me by telling me that my brother will lock me up, to keep the rich miners from laying their bags of gold dust at my feet ; and Mrs. Brimmer and Miss Chubb assure me that I have n't a decent gown to go ashore in."

"You forget Mr. Hurlstone," said Brace, with ill-concealed bitterness ; "he seems to have time enough on his hands, and I dare say would sympathize with you. You women like idle men."

"If we do, it's because only the idle men have the time to amuse us," retorted Miss Keene. "But," she added, with a laugh, "I suppose I'm getting nervous and fidgety myself ; for I find myself every now and then watching the officers and men, and listening to the orders as if something were going to happen again. I never felt so before ; I never used to have the least concern in what you call 'the working of the ship,' and now"—her voice, which had been half playful, half pettish, suddenly became grave,—"and now—look at the mate and those men forward. There certainly is something going on, or is going to happen. What *are* they looking at?"

The mate had clambered halfway up the main ratlines,

and was looking earnestly to windward. Two or three of the crew on the fore-castle were gazing in the same direction. The group of cabin-passengers on the quarter-deck, following their eyes, saw what appeared to be another low shore on the opposite bow.

"Why, there's another coast there!" said Mrs. Markham.

"It's a fog-bank," said Señor Perkins gravely. He quickly crossed the deck, exchanged a few words with the officer, and returned. Miss Keene, who had felt a sense of relief, nevertheless questioned his face as he again stood beside her. But he had recovered his beaming cheerfulness. "It's nothing to alarm you," he said, answering her glance, "but it may mean delay if we can't get out of it. You don't mind that, I know."

"No," replied the young girl, smiling. "Besides, it would be a new experience. We've had winds and calms—we only want fog now to complete our adventures. Unless it's going to make everybody cross," she continued, with a mischievous glance at Brace.

"You'll find it won't improve the temper of the officers," said Crosby, who had joined the group. "There's nothing sailors hate more than a fog. They can go to sleep in a hurricane between the rolls of a ship, but a fog keeps them awake. It's the one thing they can't shirk. There's the skipper tumbled up, too! The old man looks wrathful, don't he? But it's no use now; we're going slap into it, and the wind's failing!"

It was true. In the last few moments all that vast glistening surface of metallic blue which stretched so far to windward appeared to be slowly eaten away as if by some dull, corroding acid; the distant horizon line of sea and sky was still distinct and sharply cut, but the whole water between them had grown gray, as if some invisible shadow had passed in mid air across it. The actual fog

bank had suddenly lost its resemblance to the shore, had lifted as a curtain, and now seemed suspended over the ship. Gradually it descended ; the top-gallant and top-sails were lost in this mysterious vapor, yet the horizon line still glimmered faintly. Then another mist seemed to rise from the sea and meet it ; in another instant the deck whereon they stood shrank to the appearance of a raft adrift in a faint gray sea. With the complete obliteration of all circumambient space, the wind fell. Their isolation was complete.

It was notable that the first and most peculiar effect of this misty environment was the absolute silence. The empty, invisible sails above did not flap ; the sheets and halyards hung limp ; even the faint creaking of an unseen block overhead was so startling as to draw every eye upwards. Muffled orders from viewless figures forward were obeyed by phantoms that moved noiselessly through the gray sea that seemed to have invaded the deck. Even the passengers spoke in whispers, or held their breath, in passive groups, as if fearing to break a silence so replete with awe and anticipation. It was next noticed that the vessel was subjected to some vague motion ; the resistance of the water had ceased, the waves no longer hissed under her bows, or nestled and lapped under her counter ; a dreamy, irregular, and listless rocking had taken the place of the regular undulations ; at times, a faint and half delicious vertigo seemed to overcome their senses ; the ship was drifting.

Captain Bunker stood near the bitts, where his brief orders were transmitted to the man at the almost useless wheel. At his side Señor Perkins beamed with unshaken serenity, and hopefully replied to the captain's half surly, half anxious queries.

"By the chart we should be well east of Los Lobos island, d'ye see?" he said impatiently. "You don't

happen to remember the direction of the current off shore when you were running up here?"

"It's five years ago," said the Señor modestly; "but I remember we kept well to the west to weather Cape St. Eugenio. My impression is that there was a strong north-westerly current setting north of Ballenos Bay."

"And we're in it now," said Captain Bunker shortly. "How near St. Roque does it set?"

"Within a mile or two. I should keep away more to the west," said Señor Perkins, "and clear" —

"I ain't asking you to run the ship," interrupted Captain Bunker sharply. "How's her head now, Mr. Brooks?"

The seamen standing near cast a rapid glance at Señor Perkins, but not a muscle of his bland face moved or betrayed a consciousness of the insult. Whatever might have been the feeling towards him, at that moment the sailors — after their fashion — admired their captain; strong, masterful, and imperious. The danger that had cleared his eye, throat, and brain, and left him once more the daring and skillful navigator they knew, wiped out of their shallow minds the vicious habit that had sunk him below their level.

It had now become perceptible to even the inexperienced eyes of the passengers that the *Excelsior* was obeying some new and profound impulse. The vague drifting had ceased, and in its place had come a mysterious but regular movement, in which the surrounding mist seemed to participate, until fog and vessel moved together towards some unseen but well-defined bourne. In vain had the boats of the *Excelsior*, manned by her crew, endeavored with a towing-line to check or direct the inexplicable movement; in vain had Captain Bunker struggled, with all the skilled weapons of seamanship, against his invincible foe; wrapped in the impenetrable fog, the ship moved ghost-like to what seemed to be her doom.

The anxiety of the officers had not as yet communicated itself to the passengers ; those who had been most nervous in the ordinary onset of wind and wave looked upon the fog as a phenomenon whose only disturbance might be delay. To Miss Keene this conveyed no annoyance ; rather that placid envelopment of cloud soothed her fancy ; she submitted herself to its soft embraces, and to the mysterious onward movement of the ship, as if it were part of a youthful dream. Once she thought of the ship of Sindbad, and that fatal loadstone mountain, with an awe that was, however, half a pleasure.

"You are not frightened, Miss Keene?" said a voice near her.

She started slightly. It was the voice of Mr. Hurlstone. So thick was the fog that his face and figure appeared to come dimly out of it, like a part of her dreaming fancy. Without replying to his question, she said quickly, —

"You are better then, Mr. Hurlstone? We — we were all so frightened for you."

An angry shadow crossed his thin face, and he hesitated. After a pause he recovered himself, and said, —

"I was saying you were taking all this very quietly. I don't think there's much danger myself. And if we should go ashore here" —

"Well?" suggested Miss Keene, ignoring this first intimation of danger in her surprise at the man's manner.

"Well, we should all be separated only a few days earlier, that's all!"

More frightened at the strange bitterness of his voice than by the sense of physical peril, she was vaguely moving away towards the dimly outlined figures of her companions when she was arrested by a voice forward. There was a slight murmur among the passengers.

"What did he say?" asked Miss Keene. "What are 'Breakers ahead'?"

Hurlstone did not reply.

"Where away?" asked a second voice.

The murmur still continuing, Captain Bunker's hoarse voice pierced the gloom, — "Silence fore and aft!"

The first voice repeated faintly, —

"On the larboard bow."

There was another silence. Again the voice repeated, as if mechanically, —

"Breakers!"

"Where away?"

"On the starboard beam."

"We are in some passage or channel," said Hurlstone quietly.

The young girl glanced round her and saw for the first time that, in one of those inexplicable movements she had not understood, the other passengers had been withdrawn into a limited space of the deck, as if through some authoritative orders, while she and her companion had been evidently overlooked. A couple of sailors, who had suddenly taken their positions by the quarter-boats, strengthened the accidental separation.

"Is there some one taking care of you?" he asked, half hesitatingly; "Mr. Brace — Perkins — or" —

"No," she replied quickly. "Why?"

"Well, we are very near the boat in an emergency, and you might allow me to stay here and see you safe in it."

"But the other ladies? Mrs. Markham, and" —

"They'll take their turn after *you*," he said grimly, picking up a wrap from the railing and throwing it over her shoulders.

"But — I don't understand!" she stammered, more embarrassed by the situation than by any impending peril.

"There is very little danger, I think," he added impatiently. "There is scarcely any sea; the ship has very

little way on ; and these breakers are not over rocks. Listen."

She tried to listen. At first she heard nothing but the occasional low voice of command near the wheel. Then she became conscious of a gentle, soothing murmur through the fog to the right. She had heard such a murmuring accompaniment to her girlish dreams at Newport on a still summer night. There was nothing to frighten her, but it increased her embarrassment.

"And you?" she said awkwardly, raising her soft eyes.

"Oh, if you are all going off in the boats, by Jove, I think I'll stick to the ship!" he returned, with a frankness that would have been rude but for its utter abstraction.

Miss Keene was silent. The ship moved gently onward. The monotonous cry of the leadsmen in the chains was the only sound audible. The soundings were indicating shoaler water, although the murmuring of the surf had been left far astern. The almost imperceptible darkening of the mist on either beam seemed to show that the *Excelsior* was entering some land-locked passage. The movement of the vessel slackened, the tide was beginning to ebb. Suddenly a wave of far-off clamor, faint but sonorous, broke across the ship. There was an interval of breathless silence, and then it broke again, and more distinctly. It was the sound of bells!

The thrill of awe which passed through passengers and crew at this spiritual challenge from the vast and intangible void around them had scarcely subsided when the captain turned to Señor Perkins with a look of surly interrogation. The Señor brushed his hat further back on his head, wiped his brow, and became thoughtful.

"It's too far south for Rosario," he said deprecatingly; "and the only other mission I know of is San Carlos, and that's far inland. But that is the Angelus, and those are mission bells, surely."

The captain turned to Mr. Brooks. The voice of invisible command again passed along the deck, and, with a splash in the water and the rattling of chains, the *Excelsior* swung slowly round on her anchor on the bosom of what seemed a placid bay.

Miss Keene, who, in her complete absorption, had listened to the phantom bells with an almost superstitious exaltation, had forgotten the presence of her companion, and now turned towards him. But he was gone. The imminent danger he had spoken of, half slightly, he evidently considered as past. He had taken the opportunity offered by the slight bustle made by the lowering of the quarter-boat and the departure of the mate on a voyage of discovery to mingle with the crowd, and regain his state-room. With the anchoring of the vessel, the momentary restraint was relaxed, the passengers were allowed to pervade the deck, and Mrs. Markham and Mr. Brace simultaneously rushed to Miss Keene's side.

"We were awfully alarmed for you, my dear," said Mrs. Markham, "until we saw you had a protector. Do tell me — what *did* he say? He must have thought the danger great to have broken the Señor's orders and come upon deck? What did he talk about?"

With a vivid recollection in her mind of Mr. Hurlstone's contemptuous ignoring of the other ladies, Miss Keene became slightly embarrassed. Her confusion was not removed by the consciousness that the jealous eyes of Brace were fixed upon her.

"Perhaps he thought it was night, and walked upon deck in his sleep," remarked Brace sarcastically. "He's probably gone back to bed."

"He offered me his protection very politely, and begged to remain to put me in the boat in case of danger," said Miss Keene, recovering herself, and directing her reply to Mrs. Markham. "I think that others have made me

the same kind of offer — who were wide awake," she added mischievously to Brace.

"I would n't be too sure that they were not foolishly dreaming too," returned Brace, in a lower voice.

"I should think we all were asleep or dreaming here," said Mrs. Markham briskly. "Nobody seems to know where we are, and the only man who might guess it — Señor Perkins — has gone off in the boat with the mate."

"We're not a mile from shore and a Catholic church," said Crosby, who had joined them. "I just left Mrs. Brimmer, who is very High Church, you know, quite overcome by these Angelus bells. She's been entreating the captain to let her go ashore for vespers. It would n't be a bad idea, if we could only see what sort of a place we've got to. It would n't do to go feeling round the settlement in the dark — would it? Hallo! what's that? Oh, by Jove, that'll finish Mrs. Brimmer, sure!"

"Hush!" said Miss Keene impulsively.

He stopped. The long-drawn cadence of a chant in thin clear soprano voices swept through the fog from the invisible shore, rose high above the ship, and then fell, dying away with immeasurable sweetness and melancholy. Even when it had passed, a lingering melody seemed to fill the deck. Two or three of the foreign sailors crossed themselves devoutly; the other passengers withheld their speech, and looked at each other. Afraid to break the charm by speech, they listened again, but in vain; an infinite repose followed that seemed to pervade everything.

It was broken, at last, by the sound of oars in their rowlocks; the boat was returning. But it was noticed that the fog had slightly lifted from the surface of the water, for the boat was distinctly visible two cables' length from the ship as she approached, and it was seen

that besides the first officer and Señor Perkins there were two strangers in the boat. Everybody rushed to the side for a nearer view of those strange inhabitants of the unknown shore; but the boat's crew suddenly ceased rowing, and lay on their oars until an indistinct hail and reply passed between the boat and ship. There was a bustle forward, an unexpected thunder from the Excelsior's eight-pounder at the bow port; Captain Bunker and the second mate ranged themselves at the companion-way, and the passengers for the first time became aware that they were participating at the reception of visitors of distinction, as two strange and bizarre figures stepped upon the deck.

CHAPTER V.

TODOS SANTOS.

It was evident that the two strangers represented some exalted military and ecclesiastical authority. This was shown in their dress—a long-forgotten, half mediæval costume, that to the imaginative spectator was perfectly in keeping with their mysterious advent, and to the more practical as startling as a masquerade. The foremost figure wore a broad-brimmed hat of soft felt, with tarnished gold lace, and a dark feather tucked in its re-curved flap; a short cloak of fine black cloth thrown over one shoulder left a buff leathern jacket and breeches, ornamented with large round silver buttons, exposed until they were met by high boots of untanned yellow buckskin that reached halfway up the thigh. A broad baldric of green silk hung from his shoulder across his breast, and supported at his side a long sword with an enormous basket hilt, through which somewhat coquettishly peeped a white lace handkerchief. Tall and erect, in spite of the grizzled hair and iron-gray moustaches and wrinkled face of a man of sixty, he suddenly halted on the deck with a military precision that made the jingling chains and bits of silver on his enormous spurs ring again. He was followed by an ecclesiastic of apparently his own age, but smoothly shaven, clad in a black silk *sotana* and sash, and wearing the old-fashioned oblong, curl-brimmed hat sacred to “Don Basilo,” of the modern opera. Behind him appeared the genial face of Señor Perkins, shining with the benignant courtesy of a master of ceremonies.

"If this is a fair sample of the circus ashore, I'll take two tickets," whispered Crosby, who had recovered his audacity.

"I have the inexpressible honor," said Señor Perkins to Captain Bunker, with a gracious wave of his hand towards the extraordinary figures, "to present you to the illustrious Don Miguel Briones, Comandante of the Presidio of Todos Santos, at present hidden in the fog, and the very reverend and pious Padre Esteban, of the Mission of Todos Santos, likewise invisible. When I state to you," he continued, with a slight lifting of his voice, so as to include the curious passengers in his explanation, "that, with very few exceptions, this is the usual condition of the atmosphere at the entrance to the Mission and Presidio of Todos Santos, and that the last exception took place thirty-five years ago, when a ship entered the harbor, you will understand why these distinguished gentlemen have been willing to waive the formality of your waiting upon them first, and have taken the initiative. The illustrious Comandante has been generous to exempt you from the usual port regulations, and to permit you to wood and to water" —

"What port regulation is he talking of?" asked Captain Bunker testily.

"The Mexican regulations forbidding any foreign vessel to communicate with the shore," returned Señor Perkins deprecatingly.

"Never heard of 'em. When were they given?"

The Señor turned and addressed a few words to the commander, who stood apart in silent dignity.

"In 1792."

"In what? — Is he mad?" said Bunker. "Does he know what year this is?"

"The illustrious commander believes it to be the year of grace 1854," answered Señor Perkins quietly. "In

the case of the only two vessels who have touched here since 1792 the order was not carried out because they were Mexican coasters. The illustrious Comandante explains that the order he speaks of as on record distinctly referred to the ship 'Columbia, which belonged to the General Washington.' "

"General Washington!" echoed Bunker, angrily staring at the Señor. "What's this stuff? Do you mean to say they don't know any history later than our old Revolutionary War? Have n't they heard of the United States among them? Nor California — that we took from them during the late war?"

"Nor how we licked 'em out of their boots, and that's saying a good deal," whispered Crosby, glancing at the Comandante's feet.

Señor Perkins raised a gentle, deprecating hand.

"For fifty years the Presidio and the Mission of Todos Santos have had but this communication with the outer world," he said blandly. "Hidden by impenetrable fogs from the ocean pathway at their door, cut off by burning and sterile deserts from the surrounding country, they have preserved a trust and propagated a faith in enforced but not unhappy seclusion. The wars that have shaken mankind, the dissensions that have even disturbed the serenity of their own nation on the mainland, have never reached them here. Left to themselves, they have created a blameless Arcadia and an ideal community within an extent of twenty square leagues. Why should we disturb their innocent complacency and tranquil enjoyment by information which cannot increase and might impair their present felicity? Why should we dwell upon a late political and international episode which, while it has been a benefit to us, has been a humiliation to them as a nation, and which might not only imperil our position as guests, but interrupt our practical relations to the wood and water, with which the country abounds?"

He paused, and before the captain could speak, turned to the silent Commander, addressed him in a dozen phrases of fluent and courteous Spanish, and once more turned to Captain Bunker.

"I have told him you are touched to the heart with his courtesy, which you recognize as coming from the fit representative of the great Mexican nation. He reciprocates your fraternal emotion, and begs you to consider the Presidio and all that it contains, at your disposition and the disposition of your friends — the passengers, particularly those fair ladies," said Señor Perkins, turning with graceful promptitude towards the group of lady passengers, and slightly elevating himself on the tips of his neat boots, "whose white hands he kisses, and at whose feet he lays the devotion of a Mexican caballero and officer."

He waved his hand towards the Comandante, who, stepping forward, swept the deck with his plumed hat before each of the ladies in solemn succession. Recovering himself, he bowed more stiffly to the male passengers, picked his handkerchief out of the hilt of his sword, gracefully wiped his lips, pulled the end of his long gray moustache, and became again rigid.

"The reverend father," continued Señor Perkins, turning towards the priest, "regrets that the rules of his order prevent his extending the same courtesy to these ladies at the Mission. But he hopes to meet them at the Presidio, and they will avail themselves of his aid and counsel there and everywhere."

Father Esteban, following the speaker's words with a gracious and ready smile, at once moved forward among the passengers, offering an antique snuff-box to the gentlemen, or passing before the ladies with slightly uplifted benedictory palms and a caressing paternal gesture. Mrs. Brimmer, having essayed a French sentence, was delighted

and half frightened to receive a response from the ecclesiastic, and speedily monopolized him until he was summoned by the Commander to the returning boat.

"A most accomplished man, my dear," said Mrs. Brimmer, as the Excelsior's cannon again thundered after the retiring oars, "like all of his order. He says, although Don Miguel does not speak French, that his secretary does ; and we shall have no difficulty in making ourselves understood."

"Then you really intend to go ashore?" said Miss Keene timidly.

"Decidedly," returned Mrs. Brimmer potentially. "It would be most unpolite, not to say insulting, if we did not accept the invitation. You have no idea of the strictness of Spanish etiquette. Besides, he may have heard of Mr. Brimmer."

"As his last information was only up to 1792, he might have forgotten it," said Crosby gravely. "So perhaps it would be safer to go on the general invitation."

"As Mr. Brimmer's ancestors came over on the Mayflower, long before 1792, it does n't seem so very impossible, if it comes to that," said Mrs. Brimmer, with her usual unanswerable naiveté ; "provided always that you are not joking, Mr. Crosby. One never knows when you are serious."

"Mrs. Brimmer is quite right ; we must all go. This is no mere formality," said Señor Perkins, who had returned to the ladies. "Indeed, I have myself promised the Comandante to bring *you*," he turned towards Miss Keene, "if you will permit Mrs. Markham and myself to act as your escort. It was Don Miguel's express request."

A slight flush of pride suffused the cheek of the young girl, but the next moment she turned diffidently towards Mrs. Brimmer.

"We must all go together," she said ; "shall we not?"

"You see your triumphs have begun already," said Brace, with a nervous smile. "You need no longer laugh at me for predicting your fate in San Francisco."

Miss Keene cast a hurried glance around her, in the faint hope — she scarcely knew why — that Mr. Hurlstone had overheard the Señor's invitation ; nor could she tell why she was disappointed at not seeing him. But he had not appeared on deck during the presence of their strange visitors ; nor was he in the boat which half an hour later conveyed her to the shore. He must have either gone in one of the other boats, or fulfilled his strange threat of remaining on the ship.

The boats pulled away together towards the invisible shore, piloted by Captain Bunker, the first officer, and Señor Perkins in the foremost boat. It had grown warmer, and the fog that stole softly over them touched their faces with the tenderness of caressing fingers. Miss Keene, wrapped up in the stern sheets of the boat, gave way to the dreamy influence of this weird procession through the water, retaining only perception enough to be conscious of the singular illusions of the mist that alternately thickened and lightened before their bow. At times it seemed as if they were driving full upon a vast pier or breakwater of cold gray granite, that, opening to let the foremost boat pass, closed again before them ; at times it seemed as if they had diverged from their course, and were once more upon the open sea, the horizon a far-off line of vanishing color ; at times, faint lights seemed to pierce the gathering darkness, or to move like will-o'-wisps across the smooth surface, when suddenly the keel grated on the sand. A narrow but perfectly well defined strip of palpable strand appeared before them ; they could faintly discern the moving lower limbs of figures whose bodies were still hidden in the mist ; then they

were lifted from the boats ; the first few steps on dry land carried them out of the fog that seemed to rise like a sloping roof from the water's edge, leaving them under its canopy in the full light of actual torches held by a group of picturesquely dressed people before the vista of a faintly lit, narrow, ascending street. The dim twilight of the closing day lingered under this roof of fog, which seemed to hang scarcely a hundred feet above them, and showed a wall or rampart of brown adobe on their right that extended nearly to the water ; to the left, at the distance of a few hundred yards, another low brown wall appeared ; above it rose a fringe of foliage, and, more distant and indistinct, two white towers, that were lost in the nebulous gray.

One of the figures dressed in green jackets, who seemed to be in authority, now advanced, and, after a moment's parley with Señor Perkins while the Excelsior's passengers were being collected from the different boats, courteously led the way along the wall of the fortification. Presently a low opening or gateway appeared, followed by the challenge of a green-jacketed sentry, and the sentence, "*Dios y Libertad.*" It was repeated in the interior of a dusky courtyard, surrounded by a low corridor, where a dozen green-jacketed men of aboriginal type and complexion, carrying antique flintlocks, were drawn up as a guard of honor.

"The Comandante," said Señor Perkins, "directs me to extend his apologies to the Señor Capitano Bunker for withholding the salute which is due alike to his country, himself, and his fair company ; but fifty years of uninterrupted peace and fog have left his cannon inadequate to polite emergencies, and firmly fixed the tampion of his saluting gun. But he places the Presidio at your disposition ; you will be pleased to make its acquaintance while it is still light ; and he will await you in the guard-room."

Left to themselves, the party dispersed like dismissed school-children through the courtyard and corridors, and in the enjoyment of their release from a month's confinement on shipboard stretched their cramped limbs over the ditches, walls, and parapets, to the edge of the glacis.

Everywhere a ruin that was picturesque, a decay that was refined and gentle, a neglect that was graceful, met the eye ; the sharp exterior and reëntering angles were softly rounded and obliterated by overgrowths of semi-tropical creepers ; the abatis was filled by a natural brake of scrub-oak and manzanita ; the clematis flung its long scaling ladders over the escarpment, until Nature, slowly but securely investing the doomed fortress, had lifted a victorious banner of palm from the conquered summit of the citadel ! Some strange convulsions of the earth had completed the victory ; the barbette guns of carved and antique bronze commemorating fruitless and long-forgotten triumphs were dismounted ; one turned in the cheeks of its carriage had a trunnion raised piteously in the air like an amputated stump ; another, sinking through its rotting chassis, had buried itself to its chase in the crumbling adobe wall. But above and beyond this gentle chaos of defense stretched the real ramparts and escarpments of Todos Santos — the impenetrable and unassailable fog ! Corroding its brass and iron with saline breath, rotting its wood with unending shadow, sapping its adobe walls with perpetual moisture, and nourishing the obliterating vegetation with its quickening blood, as if laughing to scorn the puny embattlements of men — it still bent around the crumbling ruins the tender grace of an invisible but all-encompassing arm.

Señor Perkins, who had acted as cicerone to the party, pointed out these various mutations with no change from his usual optimism.

“ Protected by their peculiar isolation during the late

war, there was no necessity for any real fortification of the place. Nevertheless, it affords some occupation and position for our kind friend, Don Miguel, and so serves a beneficial purpose. This little gun," he continued, stopping to attentively examine a small but beautifully carved bronze six-pounder, which showed indications of better care than the others, "seems to be the saluting-gun Don Miguel spoke of. For the last fifty years it has spoken only the language of politeness and courtesy, and yet through want of care the tampion, as you see, has become swollen and choked in its mouth."

"How true in a larger sense," murmured Mrs. Markham, "the habit of courtesy alone preserves the fluency of the heart."

"I know you two are saying something very clever," said Mrs. Brimmer, whose small French slippers and silk stockings were beginning to show their inadequacy to a twilight ramble in the fog; "but I am so slow, and I never catch the point. Do repeat it slowly."

"The Señor was only showing us how they managed to shut up a smooth bore in this country," said Crosby gravely. "I wonder when we're going to have dinner. I suppose old Don Quixote will trot out some of his Señoritas. I want to see those choir girls that sang so stunningly a while ago."

"I suppose you mean the boys — for they're all boys in the Catholic choirs — but then, perhaps you are joking again. Do tell me if you are, for this is really amusing. I may laugh — may n't I?" As the discomfited humorist fell again to the rear amidst the laughter of the others, Mrs. Brimmer continued naively to Señor Perkins, — "Of course, as Don Miguel is a widower, there must be daughters or sisters-in-law who will meet us. Why, the priest, you know — even he — must have nieces. Really, it's a serious question — if we are to accept his hospital-

ity in a social way. Why don't you ask *him*?" she said, pointing to the green-jacketed subaltern who was accompanying them.

Señor Perkins looked half embarrassed.

"Repeat your question, my dear lady, and I will translate it."

"Ask him if there are any women at the Presidio."

Señor Perkins drew the subaltern aside. Presently he turned to Mrs. Brimmer.

"He says there are four: the wife of the baker, the wife of the saddler, the daughter of the trumpeter, and the niece of the cook."

"Good heavens! we can't meet *them*," said Mrs. Brimmer.

Señor Perkins hesitated.

"Perhaps I ought to have told you," he said blandly, "that the old Spanish notions of etiquette are very strict. The wives of the officials and higher classes do not meet strangers on a first visit, unless they are well known."

"That is n't it," said Winslow, joining them excitedly. "I've heard the whole story. It's a good joke. Banks has been bragging about us all, and saying that these ladies had husbands who were great merchants, and, as these chaps consider that all trade is vulgar, you know, they believe we are not fit to associate with their women, don't you see? All, except one — Miss Keene. She's considered all right. She's to be introduced to the Commander's women, and to the sister of the Alcalde."

"She will do nothing of the kind," said Miss Keene indignantly. "If these ladies are not to be received with me, we'll all go back to the ship together."

She spoke with a quick and perfectly unexpected resolution and independence, so foreign to her usual child-like half dependent character, that her hearers were astounded. Señor Perkins gazed at her thoughtfully. Brace,

Crosby, and Winslow admiringly ; her sister passengers with doubt and apprehension.

"There must be some mistake," said Señor Perkins gently. "I will inquire."

He was absent but a few moments. When he returned, his face was beaming.

"It's a ridiculous misapprehension. Our practical friend Banks, in his zealous attempts to impress the Comandante's secretary, who knows a little English, with the importance of Mr. Brimmer's position as a large commission merchant, has, I fear, conveyed only the idea that he was a kind of pawnbroker ; while Mr. Markham's trade in hides has established him as a tanner ; and Mr. Banks' own flour speculations, of which he is justly proud, have been misinterpreted by him as the work of a successful baker !"

"And what idea did he convey about *you* ?" asked Crosby audaciously ; "it might be interesting to us to know, for our own satisfaction."

"I fear they did not do me the honor to inquire," replied Señor Perkins, with imperturbable good-humor ; "there are some persons, you know, who carry all their worldly possessions palpably about with them. I am one of them. Call me a citizen of the world, with a strong leniency towards young and struggling nationalities ; a traveler, at home anywhere ; a delighted observer of all things, an admirer of brave men, the devoted slave of charming women — and you have, in one word, a passenger of the good ship *Excelsior*."

For the first time, Miss Keene noticed a slight irony in Señor Perkins' superabundant fluency, and that he did not conceal his preoccupation over the silent saluting gun he was still admiring. The approach of Don Miguel and Padre Esteban with a small bevy of ladies, however, quickly changed her thoughts, and detached the Señor from her

side. Her first swift feminine impression of the fair strangers was that they were plain and dowdy, an impression fully shared by the other lady passengers. But her second observation, that they were more gentle, fascinating, child-like, and feminine than her own countrywomen, was purely her own. Their loose, undulating figures, guiltless of stays; their extravagance of short, white, heavily flounced skirt, which looked like a petticoat; their lightly wrapped, formless, and hooded shoulders and heads, lent a suggestion of dishabille that Mrs. Brimmer at once resented.

"They might, at least, have dressed themselves," she whispered to Mrs. Markham.

"I really believe," returned Mrs. Markham, "they've got no bodices on!"

The introductions over, a polyglot conversation ensued in French by the Padre and Mrs. Brimmer, and in broken English by Miss Chubb, Miss Keene, and the other passengers with the Commander's secretary, varied by occasional scraps of college Latin from Mr. Crosby, the whole aided by occasional appeals to Señor Perkins. The darkness increasing, the party reëntered the courtyard, and, passing through the low-studded guard-room, entered another corridor, which looked upon a second court, enclosed on three sides, the fourth opening upon a broad plaza, evidently the public resort of the little town. Encompassing this open space, a few red-tiled roofs could be faintly seen in the gathering gloom. Chocolate and thin spiced cakes were served in the veranda, pending the preparations for a more formal banquet. Already Miss Keene had been singled out from her companions for the special attentions of her hosts, male and female, to her embarrassment and confusion. Already Doña Isabel, the sister of the Alcalde, had drawn her aside, and, with caressing frankness, had begun to question her in broken English, —

"But Miss Keene is no name. The Doña Keene is of nothing."

"Well, you may call me Eleanor, if you like," said Miss Keene, smiling.

"Doña Leonor — so ; that is good," said Doña Isabel, clapping her hands like a child. "But how are you ?"

"I beg your pardon," said Miss Keene, greatly amused, "but I don't understand."

"Ah, Caramba ! What are you, little one ?" Seeing that her guest still looked puzzled, she continued, — "Ah ! Mother of God ! Why are your friends so polite to you ? Why does every one love you so ?"

"Do they ? Well," stammered Miss Keene, with one of her rare, dazzling smiles, and her cheeks girlishly rosy with naïve embarrassment, "I suppose they think I am pretty."

"Pretty ! Ah, yes, you are !" said Doña Isabel, gazing at her curiously. "But it is not all that."

"What is it, then ?" asked Miss Keene demurely.

"You are a — a — Dama de Grandeza !"

CHAPTER VI.

"HAIL AND FAREWELL.

SUPPER was served in the inner room opening from the corridor lit by a few swinging lanterns of polished horn and a dozen wax candles of sacerdotal size and suggestion. The apartment, though spacious, was low and crypt-like, and was not relieved by the two deep oven-like hearths that warmed it without the play of firelight. But when the company had assembled it was evident that the velvet jackets, gold lace, silver buttons, and red sashes of the entertainers not only lost their tawdry and theatrical appearance in the half decorous and thoughtful gloom, but actually seemed more in harmony with it than the modern dresses of the guests. It was the Excelsior party who looked strange and bizarre in these surroundings; to the sensitive fancy of Miss Keene, Mrs. Brimmer's Parisian toilet had an air of provincial assumption; her own pretty Zouave jacket and black silk skirt horrified her with its apparent ostentatious eccentricity; and Mrs. Markham and Miss Chubb seemed dowdy and overdressed beside the satin mantillas and black lace of the Señoritas. Nor were the gentlemen less *outrés*: the stiff correctness of Mr. Banks, and the lighter foppishness of Winslow and Crosby, not to mention Señor Perkins' more pronounced unconventionality, appeared as burlesques of their own characters in a play. The crowning contrast was reached by Captain Bunker, who, in accordance with the habits of the mercantile marine of that period when in port, wore a shore-going suit

of black broadcloth, with a tall hat, high shirt collar, and diamond pin. Seated next to the Commander, it was no longer Don Miguel who looked old-fashioned, it was Captain Bunker who appeared impossible.

Nevertheless, as the meal progressed, lightened by a sweet native wine made from the Mission grape, and stimulated by champagne — a present of Captain Bunker from the cabin lockers of the *Excelsior* — this contrast, and much of the restraint that it occasioned, seemed to melt away. The passengers became talkative; the Commander and his friends unbent, and grew sympathetic and inquiring. The temptation to recite the news of the last half century, and to recount the wonderful strides of civilization in that time, was too great to be resisted by the *Excelsior* party. That some of them — notwithstanding the caution of Señor Perkins — approached dangerously near the subject of the late war between the United States and Mexico, of which Todos Santos was supposed to be still ignorant, or that Crosby in particular seized upon this opportunity for humorous exaggeration, may be readily imagined. But as the translation of the humorist's speech, as well as the indiscretions of his companions, were left to the Señor, in Spanish, and to Mrs. Brimmer and Miss Keene, in French, any imminent danger to the harmony of the evening was averted. Don Ramon Ramirez, the Alcalde, a youngish man of evident distinction, sat next to Miss Keene, and monopolized her conversation with a certain curiosity that was both grave and childish in its frank trustfulness. Some of his questions were so simple and incompatible with his apparent intelligence that she unconsciously lowered her voice in answering them, in dread of the ridicule of her companions. She could not resist the impression, which repeatedly obtruded upon her imagination, that the entire population of Todos Santos

were a party of lost children, forgotten by their parents, and grown to man and womanhood in utter ignorance of the world.

The Commander had, half informally, drunk the health of Captain Bunker, without rising from his seat, when, to Miss Keene's alarm, Captain Bunker staggered to his feet. He had been drinking freely, as usual ; but he was bent on indulging a loquacity which his discipline on shipboard had hitherto precluded, and which had, perhaps, strengthened his solitary habit. His speech was voluble and incoherent, complimentary and tactless, kindly and aggressive, courteous and dogmatic. It was left to Señor Perkins to translate it to the eye and ear of his host without incongruity or offense. This he did so admirably as to elicit not only the applause of the foreigners who did not understand English, but of his own countrymen who did not understand Spanish.

"I feel," said Señor Perkins, in graceful peroration, "that I have done poor justice to the eloquence of this gallant sailor. My unhappy translation cannot offer you that voice, at times trembling with generous emotion, and again inaudible from excessive modesty in the presence of this illustrious assembly — those limbs that waver and bend under the undulations of the chivalrous sentiment which carries him away as if he were still on that powerful element he daily battles with and conquers."

But when coffee and sweets were reached, the crowning triumph of Señor Perkins' oratory was achieved. After an impassioned burst of enthusiasm towards his hosts in their own tongue, he turned towards his own party with bland felicity.

"And how is it with us, dear friends? We find ourselves not in the port we were seeking ; not in the goal of our ambition, the haven of our hopes ; but on the shores of the decaying past. 'Ever drifting' on one of those —

‘ Shifting
Currents of the restless main,’

if our fascinating friend Mrs. Brimmer will permit us to use the words of her accomplished fellow-townsmen, H. W. Longfellow, of Boston — we find ourselves borne not to the busy hum and clatter of modern progress, but to the soft cadences of a dying crusade, and the hush of ecclesiastical repose. In place of the busy marts of commerce and the towering chimneys of labor, we have the ruined embattlements of a warlike age, and the crumbling church of an ancient Mission. Towards the close of an eventful voyage, during which we have been guided by the skillful hand and watchful eye of that gallant navigator Captain Bunker, we have turned aside from our onward course of progress to look back for a moment upon the faded footprints of those who have so long preceded us, who have lived according to their lights, and whose record is now before us. As I have just stated, our journey is near its end, and we may, in some sense, look upon this occasion, with its sumptuous entertainment, and its goodly company of gallant men and fair women, as a parting banquet. Our voyage has been a successful one. I do not now especially speak of the daring speculations of the distinguished husband of a beautiful lady whose delightful society is known to us all — need I say I refer to Quincy Brimmer, Esq., of Boston” (loud applause) — “whose successful fulfillment of a contract with the Peruvian Government, and the landing of munitions of war at Callao, has checked the uprising of the Quinquinambo insurgents? I do not refer especially to our keen-sighted business friend Mr. Banks” (applause), “who, by buying up all the flour in Callao, and shipping it to California, has virtually starved into submission the revolutionary party of Ariquepa — I do not refer to these admirable illustrations of the relations of commerce and politics, for

this, my friends — this is history, and beyond my feeble praise. Let me rather speak of the social and literary triumphs of our little community, of our floating Arcadia — may I say Olympus? Where shall we find another Minerva like Mrs. Markham, another Thalia like Miss Chubb, another Juno like Mrs. Brimmer, worthy of the Jove-like Quincy Brimmer; another Queen of Love and Beauty like — like" — continued the gallant Señor, with an effective oratorical pause, and a profound obeisance to Miss Keene, "like one whose mantling maiden blushes forbid me to name?" (Prolonged applause.) "Where shall we find more worthy mortals to worship them than our young friends, the handsome Brace, the energetic Winslow, the humorous Crosby? When we look back upon our concerts and plays, our minstrel entertainments, with the incomparable performances of our friend Crosby as Brother Bones; our recitations, to which the genius of Mrs. M'Corkle, of Peoria, Illinois, has lent her charm and her manuscript" (a burlesque start of terror from Crosby), "I am forcibly impelled to quote the impassioned words from that gifted woman, —

'When idly Life's barque on the billows of Time,
Drifts hither and yon by eternity's sea;
On the swift feet of verse and the pinions of rhyme
My thoughts, Ulricardo, fly ever to thee!'

"Who's Ulricardo?" interrupted Crosby, with assumed eagerness, followed by a "hush!" from the ladies.

"Perhaps I should have anticipated our friend's humorous question," said Señor Perkins, with unassailable good-humor. "Ulricardo, though not my own name, is a poetical substitute for it, and a mere figure of apostrophe. The poem is personal to myself," he continued, with a slight increase of color in his smooth cheek — which did not escape the attention of the ladies, — "purely as an exigency of verse, and that the inspired authoress might

more easily express herself to a friend. My acquaintance with Mrs. M'Corkle has been only epistolary. Pardon this digression, my friends, but an allusion to the muse of poetry did not seem to me to be inconsistent with our gathering here. Let me briefly conclude by saying that the occasion is a happy and memorable one ; I think I echo the sentiment of all present when I add that it is one which will not be easily forgotten by either the grateful guests, whose feelings I have tried to express, or the chivalrous hosts, whose kindness I have already so feebly translated."

In the applause that followed, and the clicking of glasses, Señor Perkins slipped away. He mingled a moment with some of the other guests who had already withdrawn to the corridor, lit a cigar, and then passed through a narrow doorway on to the ramparts. Here he strolled to some distance, as if in deep thought, until he reached a spot where the crumbling wall and its fallen débris afforded an easy descent into the ditch. Following the ditch, he turned an angle, and came upon the beach, and the low sound of oars in the invisible offing. A whistle brought the boat to his feet, and without a word he stepped into the stern sheets. A few strokes of the oars showed him that the fog had lifted slightly from the water, and a green light hanging from the side of the Excelsior could be plainly seen. Ten minutes' more steady pulling placed him on her deck, where the second officer stood with a number of the sailors listlessly grouped around him.

"The landing has been completed?" said Señor Perkins interrogatively.

"All except one boat-load more, which waits to take your final instructions," said the mate. "The men have growled a little about it," he added, in a lower tone. "They don't want to lose anything, it seems," he continued, with a half sarcastic laugh.

Señor Perkins smiled peculiarly.

"I am sorry to disappoint them. Who's that in the boat?" he asked suddenly.

The mate followed the Señor's glance.

"It is Yoto. He says he is going ashore, and you will not forbid him."

Señor Perkins approached the ship's side.

"Come here," he said to the man.

The Peruvian sailor rose, but did not make the slightest movement to obey the command.

"You say you are going ashore?" said Perkins blandly.

"Yes, Patrono."

"What for?"

"To follow him — the thief, the assassin — who struck me here;" he pointed to his head. "He has escaped again with his booty."

"You are very foolish, my Yoto; he is no thief, and has no booty. They will put *you* in prison, not him."

"*You* say so," said the man surlily. "Perhaps they will hear me — for other things," he added significantly.

"And for this you would abandon the cause?"

The man shrugged his shoulders.

"Why not?" he glanced meaningly at two of his companions, who had approached the side; "perhaps others would. Who is sending the booty ashore, eh?"

"Come out of that boat," said the Señor, leaning over the bulwarks with folded arms, and his eyes firmly fixed on the man.

The man did not move. But the Señor's hand suddenly flew to the back of his neck, smote violently downwards, and sent eighteen inches of glittering steel hurtling through the air. The bowie-knife entered the upturned throat of the man and buried itself halfway to the hilt. Without a gasp or groan he staggered forward, caught

wildly at the side of the ship, and disappeared between the boat and the vessel.

"My lads," said Señor Perkins, turning with a gentle smile towards the faces that in the light of the swinging lantern formed a ghastly circle around him, "when I boarded this ship that had brought aid and succor to our oppressors at Callao, I determined to take possession of it peacefully, without imperiling the peace and property of the innocent passengers who were intrusted to its care, and without endangering your own lives or freedom. But I made no allowance for *traitors*. The blood that has been shed to-night has not been spilt in obedience to my orders, nor to the cause that we serve; it was from *defiance* of it; and the real and only culprit has just atoned for it."

He stopped, and then stepped back from the gangway, as if to leave it open to the men.

"What I have done," he continued calmly, "I do not ask you to consider either as an example or a warning. You are free to do what *he* would have done," he repeated, with a wave of his hand towards the open gangway and the empty boat. "You are free to break your contract and leave the ship, and I give you my word that I will not lift a hand to prevent it. But if you stay with me," he said, suddenly turning upon them a face as livid as their own, "I swear by the living God, that, if between this and the accomplishment of my design, you as much as shirk or question any order given by me, you shall die the death of that dog who went before you. Choose as you please — but quickly."

The mate was the first to move. Without a word, he crossed over to the Señor's side. The men hesitated a moment longer, until one, with a strange foreign cry, threw himself on his knees before the Señor, ejaculating, "Pardon! pardon!" The others followed, some impul-

sively catching at the hand that had just slain their comrade, and covering it with kisses !

"Pardon, Patrono — we are yours."

"You are the State's," said Señor Perkins coldly, with every vestige of his former urbanity gone from his colorless face. "Enough! Go back to your duty." He watched them slink away, and then turned to the mate. "Get the last boat-load ready, and report to me."

From that moment another power seemed to dominate the ship. The men no longer moved listlessly, or slunk along the deck with perfunctory limbs ; a feverish haste and eagerness possessed them ; the boat was quickly loaded, and the mysterious debarkation completed in rapidity and silence. This done, the fog once more appeared to rise from the water and softly encompass the ship, until she seemed to be obliterated from its face. In this vague obscurity, from time to time, the faint rattling of chains was heard, the soft creaking of blocks, and later on, the regular rise and fall of oars. And then the darkness fell heavier, the sounds became more and more indistinct and were utterly lost.

Ashore, however, the lanterns still glittered brightly in the courtyard of the Presidio ; the noise of laughter and revel still came from the supper-room, and, later, the tinkling of guitars and rhythmical clapping hands showed that the festivities were being wound up by a characteristic fandango. Captain Bunker succumbed early to his potations of fiery aguardiente, and was put to bed in the room of the Commander, to whom he had sworn eternal friendship and alliance. It was long past midnight before the other guests were disposed of in the various quarters of the Presidio ; but to the ladies were reserved the more ostentatious hospitalities of the Alcalde himself, the walls of whose ambitious hacienda raised themselves across the plaza and overlooked the gardens of the Mission.

It was from one of the deep, quaintly barred windows of the hacienda that Miss Keene gazed thoughtfully on the night, unable to compose herself to sleep. An antique guest-chamber had been assigned to her in deference to her wish to be alone, for which she had declined the couch and vivacious prattle of her new friend, Doña Isabel. The events of the day had impressed her more deeply than they had her companions, partly from her peculiar inexperience of the world, and partly from her singular sensitiveness to external causes. The whole quaint story of the forgotten and isolated settlement, which had seemed to the other passengers as a trivial and half humorous incident, affected her imagination profoundly. When she could escape the attentions of her entertainers, or the frivolities of her companions, she tried to touch the far-off past on the wings of her fancy ; she tried to imagine the life of those people, forgetting the world and forgotten by it ; she endeavored to picture the fifty years of solitude amidst these decaying ruins, over which even ambition had crumbled and fallen. It seemed to her the true conventual seclusion from the world without the loss of kinship or home influences ; she contrasted it with her boarding-school life in the fashionable seminary ; she wondered what she would have become had she been brought up here ; she thought of the happy ignorance of Doña Isabel, and — shuddered ; and yet she felt herself examining the odd furniture of the room with an equally childlike and admiring curiosity. And these people looked upon *her* as a superior being !

From the deep embrasure of the window she could see the tops of the pear and olive trees, in the misty light of an invisible moon that suffused the old Mission garden with an ineffable and angelic radiance. To her religious fancy it seemed to be a spiritual effusion of the church

itself, enveloping the two gray dome-shaped towers with an atmosphere and repose of its own, until it became the incarnate mystery and passion where it stood.

She was suddenly startled by a moving shadow beside the wall, almost immediately below her — the figure of a man! He was stealing cautiously towards the church, as if to gain the concealment of the shrubbery that grew beside it, and, furtively glancing from side to side, looked towards her window. She unconsciously drew back, forgetting at the moment that her light was extinguished, and that it was impossible for the stranger to see her. But she had seen *him*, and in that instant recognized Mr. Hurlstone!

Then he *had* come ashore, and secretly, for the other passengers believed him still on the ship! But what was he doing there? — and why had he not appeared with the others at the entertainment? She could understand his avoidance of them from what she knew of his reserved and unsocial habits; but when he could so naturally have remained on shipboard, she could not, at first, conceive why he should wish to prowling around the town at the risk of detection. The idea suddenly occurred to her that he had had another attack of his infirmity and was walking in his sleep, and for an instant she thought of alarming the house, that some one might go to his assistance. But his furtive movements had not the serene impassibility of the somnambulist. Another thought withheld her; he had looked up at her window! Did he know she was there? A faint stirring of shame and pleasure sent a slight color to her cheek. But he had gained the corner of the shrubbery and was lost in the shadow. She turned from the window. A gentle sense of vague and half maternal pity suffused her soft eyes as she at last sought her couch and fell into a deep slumber.

Towards daybreak a wind arose over the sleeping town

and far outlying waters. It breathed through the leaves of the Mission garden, brushed away the clinging mists from the angles of the towers, and restored the sharp outlines of the ruined fortifications. It swept across the unruffled sea to where the Excelsior, cradled in the softly heaving bay, had peacefully swung at anchor on the previous night, and lifted the snowy curtain of the fog to seaward as far as the fringe of surf, a league away.

But the cradle of the deep was empty — the ship was gone !

CHAPTER VII.

THE GENTLE CASTAWAYS.

MISS KEENE was awakened from a heavy sleep by a hurried shake of her shoulder and an indefinite feeling of alarm. Opening her eyes, she was momentarily dazed by the broad light of day, and the spectacle of Mrs. Brimmer, pale and agitated, in a half-Spanish dishabille, standing at her bedside.

"Get up and dress yourself, my dear, at once," she said hurriedly, but at the same time attentively examining Miss Keene's clothes, that were lying on the chair: "and thank Heaven you came here in an afternoon dress, and not in an evening costume like mine! For something awful has happened, and Heaven only knows whether we'll ever see a stitch of our clothes again."

"*What* has happened?" asked Miss Keene impatiently, sitting up in bed, more alarmed at the unusual circumstance of Mrs. Brimmer's unfinished toilet than at her incomplete speech.

"What, indeed! Nobody knows; but it's something awful — a mutiny, or shipwreck, or piracy. But there's your friend, the Commander, calling out the troops; and such a set of Christy Minstrels you never saw before! There's the Alcalde summoning the Council; there's Mr. Banks raving, and running round for a steamboat — as if these people ever heard of such a thing! — and Captain Bunker, what with rage and drink, gone off in a fit of delirium tremens, and locked up in his room! And the *Excelsior* gone — the Lord knows where!"

"Gone!" repeated Miss Keene, hurrying on her clothes. "Impossible! What does Father Esteban tell you? What does Doña Isabel say?"

"That's the most horrible part of it! Do you know those wretched idiots believe it's some political revolution among ourselves, like their own miserable government. I believe that baby Isabel thinks that King George and Washington have something to do with it; at any rate, they're anxious to know to what side you belong! So, for goodness' sake! if you have to humor them, say we're all on the same side — I mean, don't you and Mrs. Markham go against Miss Chubb and me."

Scarcely knowing whether to laugh or cry at Mrs. Brimmer's incoherent statement, Miss Keene hastily finished dressing as the door flew open to admit the impulsive Doña Isabel and her sister Juanita. The two Mexican girls threw themselves in Miss Keene's arms, and then suddenly drew back with a movement of bashful and diffident respect.

"Do, pray, ask them, for I dare n't," whispered Mrs. Brimmer, trying to clasp a mantilla around her, "how this thing is worn, and if they have n't got something like a decent bonnet to lend me for a day or two?"

"The Señora has not then heard that her goods, and all the goods of the Señores and Señoras, have been discovered safely put ashore at the Embarcadero?"

"No?" said Mrs. Brimmer eagerly.

"Ah, yes!" responded Doña Isabel. "Since the Señora is not of the revolutionary party."

Mrs. Brimmer cast a supplicatory look at Miss Keene, and hastily quitted the room. Miss Keene would have as quickly followed her, but the young Ramirez girls threw themselves again tragically upon her breast, and, with a mysterious gesture of silence, whispered, —

"Fear nothing, Excellencia! We are yours — we will

die for you, no matter what Don Ramon, or the Comandante, or the Ayuntamiento, shall decide. Trust us, little one! — pardon — Excellencia, we mean."

"What *is* the matter?" said Miss Keene, now thoroughly alarmed, and releasing herself from the twining arms about her. "For Heaven's sake let me go! I must see somebody! Where is — where is Mrs. Markham?"

"The Markham? Is it the severe one? — as thus," — said Doña Isabel, striking an attitude of infantine portentousness.

"Yes," said Miss Keene, smiling in spite of her alarm.

"She is arrested."

"Arrested!" said Eleanor Keene, her cheeks aflame with indignation. "For what? Who dare do this thing?"

"The Comandante. She has a missive — a despatch from the insurrectionaries."

Without another word, and feeling that she could stand the suspense no longer, Miss Keene forced her way past the young girls, unheeding their cries of consternation and apology, and quickly reached the patio. A single glance showed her that Mrs. Brimmer was gone. With eyes and cheeks still burning, she swept past the astounded peons, through the gateway, into the open plaza. Only one idea filled her mind — to see the Commander, and demand the release of her friend. How she should do it, with what arguments she should enforce her demand, never occurred to her. She did not even think of asking the assistance of Mr. Brace, Mr. Crosby, or any of her fellow-passengers. The consciousness of some vague crisis that she alone could meet possessed her completely.

The plaza was swarming with a strange rabble of peons and soldiery; of dark, lowering faces, odd-looking

weapons and costumes, mules, mustangs, and cattle — a heterogeneous mass, swayed by some fierce excitement. That she saw none of the Excelsior party among them did not surprise her; an instinct of some catastrophe more serious than Mrs. Brimmer's vague imaginings frightened but exalted her. With head erect, leveled brows, and bright, determined eyes she walked deliberately into the square. The crowd parted and gave way before this beautiful girl, with her bared head and its invincible crest of chestnut curls. Presently they began to follow her, with a compressed murmur of admiration, until, before she was halfway across the plaza, the sentries beside the gateway of the Presidio were astonished at the vision of a fair-haired and triumphant Pallas, who appeared to be leading the entire population of Todos Santos to victorious attack. In vain a solitary bugle blew, in vain the rolling drum beat an alarm, the sympathetic guard only presented arms as Miss Keene, flushed and excited, her eyes darkly humid with gratified pride, swept past them into the actual presence of the bewildered and indignant Comandante.

The only feminine consciousness she retained was that she was more relieved at her deliverance from the wild cattle and unbroken horses of her progress than from the Indians and soldiers.

"I want to see Mrs. Markham, and to know by what authority she is arrested," said Miss Keene boldly.

"The Señor Comandante can hold no conference with you until you disperse your party," interpreted the secretary.

She was about to hurriedly reply that she knew nothing of the crowd that had accompanied her; but she was withheld by a newly-born instinct of tact.

"How do I know that I shall not be arrested, like my friend?" she said quickly. "She is as innocent as myself,"

"The Comandante pledges himself, as a hidalgo, that you shall not be harmed."

Her first impulse was to advance to the nearest intruders at the gate and say, "Do go away, please ;" but she was doubtful of its efficiency, and was already too exalted by the situation to be satisfied with its prosaic weakness. But her newly developed diplomacy again came to her aid. "You may tell them so, if you choose, I cannot answer for them," she said, with apparent dark significance.

The secretary advanced on the corridor and exchanged a few words with her more impulsive followers. Miss Keene, goddess-like and beautiful, remained erect behind him, and sent them a dazzling smile and ravishing wave of her little hand. The crowd roared with an effusive and bovine delight that half frightened her, and with a dozen "Viva la Reyna Americanas!" she was hurried by the Comandante into the guard-room.

"You ask to know of what the Señora Markham is accused," said the Commander, more gently. "She has received correspondence from the pirate — Perkins!"

"The pirate — Perkins?" said Miss Keene, with indignant incredulity.

"The buccaneer who wrote that letter. Read it to her, Manuel."

The secretary took his eyes from the young girl's glowing face, coughed slightly, and then read as follows : —

"ON BOARD THE EXCELSIOR, of the Quinquambo
Independent States Navy, *August 8, 1854.*

"To Captain Bunker. — Sir," . . .

"But this is not addressed to *you*!" interrupted Miss Keene indignantly.

"The Captain Bunker is a raving madman," said the Commander gravely. "Read on!"

The color gradually faded from the young girl's cheek as the secretary continued, in a monotonous voice : —

“I have the honor to inform you that the barque *Excelsior* was, on the 8th of July, 1854, and the first year of the Quinquinambo Independence, formally condemned by the Federal Council of Quinquinambo, for having aided and assisted the enemy with munitions of war and supplies, against the law of nations, and the tacit and implied good-will between the Republic of the United States and the struggling Confederacies of South America ; and that, in pursuance thereof, and under the law of reprisals and letters of marque, was taken possession of by me yesterday. The goods and personal effects belonging to the passengers and yourself have been safely landed at the Embarcadero of Todos Santos — a neutral port — by my directions ; my interpretation of the orders of the Federal Council excepting innocent non-combatants and their official protector from confiscation or amercement.

“I take the liberty of requesting you to hand the inclosed order on the Treasury of the Quinquinambo Confederate States to Don Miguel Briones, in payment of certain stores and provisions, and of a piece of ordnance known as the saluting cannon of the Presidio of Todos Santos. *Vigilancia !*

“Your obedient servant,

“LEONIDAS BOLIVAR PERKINS,

“Generalissimo Commanding Land and Sea Forces,
Quinquinambo Independent States.”

In her consternation at this fuller realization of the vague catastrophe, Miss Keene still clung to the idea that had brought her there.

“But Mrs. Markham has nothing to do with all this?”

“Then why does she refuse to give up her secret correspondence with the pirate Perkins?” returned the secretary.

Miss Keene hesitated. Had Mrs. Markham any previous knowledge of the Señor's real character?

"Why don't you arrest the men?" she said scornfully. "There is Mr. Banks, Mr. Crosby, Mr. Winslow, and Mr. Brace." She uttered the last name more contemptuously, as she thought of that young gentleman's protestations and her present unprotected isolation.

"They are already arrested and removed to San Antonio, a league hence," returned the secretary. "It is fact enough that they have confessed that their Government has seized the Mexican province of California, and that they were on their way to take possession of it."

Miss Keene's heart sank.

"But you knew all this yesterday," she faltered; "and our war with Mexico is all over years ago."

"We did not know it last night at the banquet, Señora; nor would we have known it but for this treason and division in your own party."

A sudden light flashed upon Miss Keene's mind. She now comprehended the advances of Doña Isabel. Extravagant and monstrous as it seemed, these people evidently believed that a revolution had taken place in the United States; that the two opposing parties had been represented by the passengers of the *Excelsior*; and that one party had succeeded, headed by the indomitable Perkins. If she could be able to convince them of their blunder, would it be wise to do so? She thought of Mrs. Brimmer's supplication to be ranged "on her side," and realized with feminine quickness that the situation might be turned to her countrymen's advantage. But which side had *Todos Santos* favored? It was left to her woman's wit to discover this, and conceive a plan to rescue her helpless companions.

Her suspense was quickly relieved. The Commander and his secretary exchanged a few words.

"The Comandante will grant Doña Leonora's request," said the secretary, "if she will answer a question."

"What is it?" responded Miss Keene, with inward trepidation.

"The Señora Markham is perhaps beloved by the Pirate Perkins?"

In spite of her danger, in spite of the uncertain fate hanging over her party, Miss Keene could with difficulty repress a half hysterical inclination to laugh. Even then, it escaped in a sudden twinkle of her eye, which both the Commander and his subordinate were quick to notice, as she replied demurely, "Perhaps."

It was enough for the Commander. A gleam of antique archness and venerable raillery lit up his murky, tobacco-colored pupils; a spasm of gallantry crossed the face of the secretary.

"Ah — what would you? — it is the way of the world," said the Commander. "We comprehend. Come!"

He led the way across the corridor, and suddenly opened a small barred door. Whatever preconceived idea Miss Keene may have had of her unfortunate country-woman immured in a noisome cell, and guarded by a stern jailer, was quite dissipated by the soft misty sunshine that flowed in through the open door. The prison of Mrs. Markham was a part of the old glacis which had been allowed to lapse into a wild garden that stretched to the edge of the sea. There was a summer-house built on — and partly from — a crumbling bastion, and here, under the shade of tropical creepers, the melancholy captive was comfortably writing, with her portable desk on her knee, and a traveling-bag at her feet. A Saratoga trunk of obtrusive proportions stood in the centre of the peaceful vegetation, like a newly raised altar to an unknown deity. The only suggestion of martial surveillance

was an Indian soldier, whose musket, reposing on the ground near Mrs. Markham, he had exchanged for the rude mattock with which he was quietly digging.

The two women, with a cry of relief, flew into each other's arms. The Commander and his secretary discreetly retired to an angle of the wall.

"I find everything as I left it, my dear, even to my slipper-bag," said Mrs. Markham. "They've forgotten nothing."

"But you are a captive!" said Eleanor. "What does it mean?"

"Nothing, my dear. I gave them a piece of my mind," said Mrs. Markham, looking, however, as if that mental offering had by no means exhausted her capital, "and I have written six pages to the Governor at Mazatlan, and a full account to Mr. Markham."

"And they won't get them in thirty years!" said Miss Keene impetuously. "But where is this letter from Señor Perkins. And, for Heaven's sake, tell me if you had the least suspicion before of anything that has happened."

"Not in the least. The man is mad, my dear, and I really believe driven so by that absurd Illinois woman's poetry. Did you ever see anything so ridiculous — and shameful, too — as the 'Ulricardo' business? I don't wonder he colored so."

Miss Keene winced with annoyance. Was everybody going crazy, or was there anything more in this catastrophe that had only enfeebled the minds of her countrywomen! For here was the severe, strong-minded Mrs. Markham actually preoccupied, like Mrs. Brimmer, with utterly irrelevant particulars, and apparently powerless to grasp the fact that they were abandoned on a half hostile strand, and cut off by half a century from the rest of the world.

"As to the letter," said Mrs. Markham, quietly, "there

it is. There's nothing in it that might not have been written by a friend."

Miss Keene took the letter. It was written in a delicate, almost feminine hand. She could not help noticing that in one or two instances corrections had been made and blots carefully removed with an eraser.

"Midnight, on the Excelsior.

"MY FRIEND: When you receive this I shall probably be once more on the bosom of that mysterious and mighty element whose majesty has impressed us, whose poetry we have loved, and whose moral lessons, I trust, have not been entirely thrown away upon us. I go to the deliverance of one of those oppressed nations whose history I have often recited to you, and in whose destiny you have from time to time expressed a womanly sympathy. While it is probable, therefore, that my *motives* may not be misunderstood by you, or even other dear friends of the Excelsior, it is by no means impossible that the celerity and unexpectedness of my *action* may not be perfectly appreciated by the careless mind, and may seem to require some explanation. Let me then briefly say that the idea of debarking your goods and chattels, and parting from your delightful company at Todos Santos, only occurred to me on our unexpected — shall I say *Providential*? — arrival at that spot; and the necessity of expedition forbade me either inviting your coöperation or soliciting your confidence. Human intelligence is variously constituted — or, to use a more homely phrase, 'many men have many minds' — and it is not impossible that a premature disclosure of my plans might have jeopardized that harmony which you know it has been my desire to promote. It was my original intention to have landed you at Mazatlan, a place really inferior in climate and natural attractions to Todo Santos, although, per-

haps, more easy of access and egress ; but the presence of an American steamer in the offing would have invested my enterprise with a certain publicity foreign, I think, to all our tastes. Taking advantage, therefore, of my knowledge of the peninsular coast, and the pardonable ignorance of Captain Bunker, I endeavored, through my faithful subordinates, to reach a less known port, and a coast rarely frequented by reason of its prevailing fog. Here occurred one of those dispensations of an overruling power which, dear friend, we have so often discussed. We fell in with an unknown current, and were guided by a mysterious hand into the bay of Todos Santos !

“ You know of my belief in the infinite wisdom and benignity of events ; you have, dear friend, with certain feminine limitations, shared it with me. Could there have been a more perfect illustration of it than the power that led us here ? On a shore, historic in interest, beautiful in climate, hospitable in its people, utterly freed from external influences, and absolutely without a compromising future, you are landed, my dear friend, with your youthful companions. From the crumbling ruins of a decaying Past you are called to construct an Arcadia of your own ; the rudiments of a new civilization are within your grasp ; the cost of existence is comparatively trifling ; the various sums you have with you, which even in the chaos of revolution I have succeeded in keeping intact, will more than suffice to your natural wants for years to come. Were I not already devoted to the task of freeing Quinquinambo, I should willingly share this Elysium with you all. But, to use the glowing words of Mrs. M'Corkle, slightly altering the refrain —

‘ Ah, stay me not ! With flying feet
O'er desert sands, I rush to greet
My fate, my love, my life, my sweet
Quinquinambo ! ’

"I venture to intrust to your care two unpublished manuscripts of that gifted woman. The dangers that may environ my present mission, the vicissitudes of battle by sea or land, forbid my imperiling their natural descent to posterity. You, my dear friend, will preserve them for the ages to come, occasionally refreshing yourself, from time to time, from that Parnassian spring.

"Adieu! my friend. I look around the familiar cabin, and miss your gentle faces. I feel as Jason might have felt, alone on the deck of the *Argo* when his companions were ashore, except that I know of no Circean influences to mar their destiny. In examining the state-rooms to see if my orders for the complete restoration of passengers' property had been carried out, I allowed myself to look into yours. Lying alone, forgotten and overlooked, I saw a peculiar jet hair-pin which I think I have observed in the coils of your tresses. May I venture to keep this gentle instrument as a reminder of the superior intellect it has so often crowned? Adieu, my friend.

"Ever yours, LEONIDAS BOLIVAR PERKINS."

"Well?" said Mrs. Markham impatiently, as Miss Keene remained motionless with the letter in her hand.

"It seems like a ridiculous nightmare! I can't understand it at all. The man that wrote this letter may be mad — but he is neither a pirate nor a thief — and yet" —

"He a pirate?" echoed Mrs. Markham indignantly; "he's nothing of the kind! It's not even his *fault*!"

"Not his fault?" repeated Miss Keene; "are you mad, too?"

"No — nor a fool, my dear! Don't you see? It's all the fault of Banks and Brimmer for compromising the vessel: of that stupid, drunken captain for permitting it. Señor Perkins is a liberator, a patriot, who has perilled himself and his country to treat us magnanimously.

Don't you see it? It's like that Banks and that Mrs. Brimmer to call *him* a pirate! I've a good mind to give the Commander my opinion of *them*."

"Hush!" said Miss Keene, with a sudden recollection of the Commander's suspicions, "for Heaven's sake; you do not know what you are saying. Look! they were talking with that strange man, and now they are coming this way."

The Commander and his secretary approached them. They were both more than usually grave; but the look of inquiry and suspicion with which they regarded the two women was gone from their eyes.

"The Señor Comandante says you are free, Señoras, and begs you will only decide whether you will remain his guests or the guests of the Alcalde. But for the present he cannot allow you any communication with the prisoners of San Antonio."

"There is further news?" said Miss Keene faintly, with a presentiment of worse complications.

"There is! A body from the *Excelsior* has been washed on shore."

The two women turned pale.

"In the pocket of the murdered man is an accusation against one Señor Hurlstone, who was concealed on the ship; who came not ashore openly with the other passengers, but who escaped in secret, and is now hiding somewhere in Todos Santos."

"And you suspect him of this infamous act?" said Eleanor, forgetting all prudence in her indignation. "You are deceiving yourself. He is as innocent as I am!"

The Commander and the secretary smiled sapiently, but gently.

"The Señor Comandante believes you, Doña Leonora: the Señor Hurlstone is innocent of the piracy. He is, of a surety, the leader of the Opposition."

CHAPTER VIII.

IN SANCTUARY.

WHEN James Hurlstone reached the shelter of the shrubbery he leaned exhaustedly against the adobe wall, and looked back upon the garden he had just traversed. At its lower extremity a tall hedge of cactus reinforced the crumbling wall with a *cheval de frise* of bristling thorns ; it was through a gap in this green barrier that he had found his way a few hours before, as his torn clothes still testified. At one side ran the low wall of the Alcalde's *casa*, a mere line of dark shadow in that strange diaphanous mist that seemed to suffuse all objects. The gnarled and twisted branches of pear-trees, gouty with old age, bent so low as to impede any progress under their formal avenues ; out of a tangled labyrinth of figtrees, here and there a single plume of feathery palm swam in a drowsy upper radiance. The shrubbery around him, of some unknown variety, exhaled a faint perfume ; he put out his hand to grasp what appeared to be a young catalpa, and found it the trunk of an enormous passion vine, that, creeping softly upward, had at last invaded the very belfry of the dim tower above him ; and touching it, his soul seemed to be lifted with it out of the shadow.

The great hush and quiet that had fallen like a benediction on every sleeping thing around him ; the deep and passionless repose that seemed to drop from the bending boughs of the venerable trees ; the cool, restful, earthy breath of the shadowed mold beneath him, touched only by a faint jessamine-like perfume as of a dead passion,

lulled the hurried beatings of his heart and calmed the feverish tremor of his limbs. He allowed himself to sink back against the wall, his hands tightly clasped before him. Gradually, the set, abstracted look of his eyes faded and became suffused, as if moistened by that celestial mist. Then he rose quickly, drew his sleeve hurriedly across his lashes, and began slowly to creep along the wall again.

Either the obscurity of the shrubbery became greater or he was growing preoccupied ; but in steadying himself by the wall he had, without perceiving it, put his hand upon a rude door that, yielding to his pressure, opened noiselessly into a dark passage. Without apparent reflection he entered, followed the passage a few steps until it turned abruptly ; turning with it, he found himself in the body of the Mission Church of Todos Santos. A swinging-lamp, that burned perpetually before an effigy of the Virgin Mother, threw a faint light on the single rose-window behind the high altar ; another, suspended in a low archway, apparently lit the open door of the passage towards the refectory. By the stronger light of the latter Hurlstone could see the barbaric red and tarnished gold of the rafters that formed the straight roof. The walls were striped with equally bizarre coloring, half Moorish and half Indian. A few hangings of dyed and painted cloths with heavy fringes were disposed on either side of the chancel, like the flaps of a wigwam ; and the aboriginal suggestion was further repeated in a quantity of colored beads and sea-shells that decked the communion-rails. The Stations of the Cross, along the walls, were commemorated by paintings, evidently by a native artist — to suit the same barbaric taste ; while a larger picture of San Francisco d'Assis, under the choir, seemed to belong to an older and more artistic civilization. But the sombre half-light of the two lamps mellowed and softened

the harsh contrast of these details until the whole body of the church appeared filled with a vague harmonious shadow. The air, heavy with the odors of past incense, seemed to be a part of that expression, as if the solemn and sympathetic twilight became palpable in each deep, long-drawn inspiration.

Again overcome by the feeling of repose and peacefulness, Hurlstone sank upon a rude settle, and bent his head and folded arms over a low railing before him. How long he sat there, allowing the subtle influence to transfuse and possess his entire being, he did not know. The faint twitter of birds suddenly awoke him. Looking up, he perceived that it came from the vacant square of the tower above him, open to the night and suffused with its mysterious radiance. In another moment the roof of the church was swiftly crossed and recrossed with tiny and adventurous wings. The mysterious light had taken an opaline color. Morning was breaking.

The slow rustling of a garment, accompanied by a soft but heavy tread, sounded from the passage. He started to his feet as the priest, whom he had seen on the deck of the *Excelsior*, entered the church from the refectory. The Padre was alone. At the apparition of a stranger, torn and disheveled, he stopped involuntarily and cast a hasty look towards the heavy silver ornaments on the altar. Hurlstone noticed it, and smiled bitterly.

"Don't alarm yourself. I only sought this place for shelter."

He spoke in French—the language he had heard Padre Esteban address to Mrs. Brimmer. But the priest's quick eye had already detected his own mistake. He lifted his hand with a sublime gesture towards the altar, and said,—

"You are right! Where should you seek shelter but here?"

The reply was so unexpected that Hurlstone was silent. His lips quivered slightly.

"And if it were *sanctuary* I was seeking?" he said.

"You would first tell me why you sought it," said Padre Esteban gently.

Hurlstone looked at him irresolutely for a moment, and then said, with the hopeless desperation of a man anxious to anticipate his fate, —

"I am a passenger on the ship you boarded yesterday. I came ashore with the intention of concealing myself somewhere here until she had sailed. When I tell you that I am not a fugitive from justice, that I have committed no offense against the ship or her passengers, nor have I any intention of doing so, but that I only wish concealment from their knowledge for twenty-four hours, you will know enough to understand that you run no risk in giving me assistance. I can tell you no more."

"I did not see you with the other passengers, either on the ship or ashore," said the priest. "How did you come here?"

"I swam ashore before they left. I did not know they had any idea of landing here; I expected to be the only one, and there would have been no need for concealment then. But I am not lucky," he added, with a bitter laugh.

The priest glanced at his garments, which bore the traces of the sea, but remained silent.

"Do you think I am lying?"

The old priest lifted his head with a gesture.

"Not to me — but to God!"

The young man followed the gesture, and glanced around the barbaric church with a slight look of scorn. But the profound isolation, the mystic seclusion, and, above all, the complete obliteration of that world and civilization he shrank from and despised, again subdued

and overcame his rebellious spirit. He lifted his eyes to the priest.

"Nor to God," he said gravely.

"Then why withhold anything from Him here?" said the priest gently.

"I am not a Catholic—I do not believe in confession," said Hurlstone doggedly, turning aside.

But Padre Esteban laid his large brown hand on the young man's shoulder. Touched by some occult suggestion in its soft contact, he sank again into his seat.

"Yet you ask for the sanctuary of His house—a sanctuary bought by that contrition whose first expression is the bared and open soul! To the first worldly shelter you sought—the peon's hut or the Alcalde's *casa*—you would have thought it necessary to bring a story. You would not conceal from the physician whom you asked for balsam either the wound, the symptoms, or the cause? Enough," he said kindly, as Hurlstone was about to reply. "You shall have your request. You shall stay here. I will be your physician, and will salve your wounds; if any poison I know not of rankle there, you will not blame me, son, but perhaps you will assist me to find it. I will give you a secluded cell in the dormitory until the ship has sailed. And then"—

He dropped quietly on the settle, took the young man's hand paternally in his own, and gazed into his eyes as if he read his soul.

And then . . . Ah, yes . . . What then? Hurlstone glanced once more around him. He thought of the quiet night; of the great peace that had fallen upon him since he had entered the garden, and the promise of a greater peace that seemed to breathe with the incense from those venerable walls. He thought of that crumbling barrier, that even in its ruin seemed to shut out, more completely than anything he had conceived, his bitter past, and the

bitter world that recalled it. He thought of the long days to come, when, forgetting and forgotten, he might find a new life among these simple aliens, themselves forgotten by the world. He had thought of this once before in the garden; it occurred to him again in this Lethe-like oblivion of the little church, in the kindly pressure of the priest's hand. The ornaments no longer looked uncouth and barbaric — rather they seemed full of some new spiritual significance. He suddenly lifted his eyes to Padre Esteban, and, half rising to his feet, said, —

“Are we alone?”

“We are; it is a half-hour yet before mass,” said the priest.

“My story will not last so long,” said the young man hurriedly, as if fearing to change his mind. “Hear me, then — it is no crime nor offense to any one; more than that, it concerns no one but myself — it is of” —

“A woman,” said the priest softly. “So! we will sit down, my son.”

He lifted his hand with a soothing gesture — the movement of a physician who has just arrived at an easy diagnosis of certain uneasy symptoms. There was also a slight suggestion of an habitual toleration, as if even the seclusion of Todos Santos had not been entirely free from the invasion of the primal passion.

Hurlstone waited for an instant, but then went on rapidly.

“It is of a woman, who has cursed my life, blasted my prospects, and ruined my youth; a woman who gained my early affection only to blight and wither it; a woman who should be nearer to me and dearer than all else, and yet who is further than the uttermost depths of hell from me in sympathy or feeling; a woman that I should cleave to, but from whom I have been flying, ready to face shame,

disgrace, oblivion, even that death which alone can part us : for that woman is — my wife.”

He stopped, out of breath, with fixed eyes and a rigid mouth. Father Esteban drew a snuff-box from his pocket, and a large handkerchief. After blowing his nose violently, he took a pinch of snuff, wiped his lip, and replaced the box.

“A bad habit, my son,” he said apologetically, “but an old man’s weakness. Go on.”

“I met her first five years ago — the wife of another man. Don’t misjudge me, it was no lawless passion ; it was a friendship, I believed, due to her intellectual qualities as much as to her womanly fascinations ; for I was a young student, lodging in the same house with her, in an academic town. Before I ever spoke to her of love, she had confided to me her own unhappiness — the uncongeniality of her married life, the harshness, and even brutality, of her husband. Even a man less in love than I was could have seen the truth of this — the contrast of the coarse, sensual, and vulgar man with an apparently refined and intelligent woman ; but any one else except myself would have suspected that such a union was not merely a sacrifice of the woman. I believed her. It was not until long afterwards that I learned that her marriage had been a condonation of her youthful errors by a complaisant bridegroom ; that her character had been saved by a union that was a mutual concession. But I loved her madly ; and when she finally got a divorce from her uncongenial husband, I believed it less an expression of her love for me than an act of justice. I did not know at the time that they had arranged the divorce together, as they had arranged their marriage, by equal concessions.

“I was the only son of a widowed mother, whose instincts were from the first opposed to my friendship with

this woman, and what she prophetically felt would be its result. Unfortunately, both she and my friends were foolish enough to avow their belief that the divorce was obtained solely with a view of securing me as a successor; and it was this argument more than any other that convinced me of my duty to protect her. Enough, I married, not only in spite of all opposition — but *because* of it.

“My mother would have reconciled herself to the marriage, but my wife never forgave the opposition, and, by some hellish instinct divining that her power over me might be weakened by maternal influence, precipitated a quarrel which forever separated us. With the little capital left by my father, divided between my mother and myself, I took my wife to a western city. Our small income speedily dwindled under the debts of her former husband, which she had assumed to purchase her freedom. I endeavored to utilize a good education and some accomplishments in music and the languages by giving lessons and by contributing to the press. In this my wife first made a show of assisting me, but I was not long in discovering that her intelligence was superficial and shallow, and that the audacity of expression, which I had believed to be originality of conviction, was simply shamelessness, and a desire for notoriety. She had a facility in writing sentimental poetry, which had been efficacious in her matrimonial confidences, but which editors of magazines and newspapers found to be shallow and insincere. To my astonishment, she remained unaffected by this, as she was equally impervious to the slights and sneers that continually met us in society. At last the inability to pay one of her former husband's claims brought to me a threat and an anonymous letter. I laid them before her, when a scene ensued which revealed the blindness of my folly in all its hideous hopelessness: she accused me of complicity in her divorce,

and deception in regard to my own fortune. In a speech, whose language was a horrible revelation of her early habits, she offered to arrange a divorce from me as she had from her former husband. She gave as a reason her preference for another, and her belief that the scandal of a suit would lend her a certain advertisement and prestige. It was a combination of Messalina and Mrs. Jarley"—

"Pardon! I remember not a Madame Jarley," said the priest.

"Of viciousness and commercial calculation," continued Hurlstone hurriedly. "I don't remember what happened; she swore that I struck her! Perhaps—God knows! But she failed, even before a western jury, to convict me of cruelty. The judge that thought me half insane would not believe me brutal, and her application for divorce was lost.

"I need not tell you that the same friends who had opposed my marriage now came forward to implore me to allow her to break our chains. I refused. I swear to you it was from no lingering love for her, for her presence drove me mad; it was from no instinct of revenge or jealousy, for I should have welcomed the man who would have taken her out of my life and memory. But I could not bear the idea of taking her first husband's place in her hideous comedy; I could not purchase my freedom at that price—at any price. I was told that I could get a divorce against *her*, and stand forth before the world untrammelled and unstained. But I could not stand before *myself* in such an attitude. I knew that the shackles I had deliberately forged could not be loosened except by death. I knew that the stains of her would cling to me and become a part of my own sin, even as the sea I plunged into yesterday to escape her, though it has dried upon me, has left its bitter salt behind.

"When she knew my resolve, she took her revenge by dragging my name through the successive levels to which she descended. Under the plea that the hard-earned sum I gave to her maintenance apart from me was not sufficient, she utilized her undoubted beauty and more doubtful talent in amateur entertainments — and, finally, on the stage. She was openly accompanied by her lover, who acted as her agent, in the hope of goading me to a divorce. Suddenly she disappeared. I thought she had forgotten me. I obtained an honorable position in New York. One night I entered a theater devoted to burlesque opera and the exhibition of a popular actress, known as the Western Thalia, whose beautiful and audaciously draped figure was the talk of the town. I recognized my wife in this star of nudity ; more than that, she recognized me. The next day, in addition to the usual notice, the real name of the actress was given in the morning papers, with a sympathizing account of her romantic and unfortunate marriage. I renounced my position, and, taking advantage of an offer from an old friend in California, resolved to join him secretly there. My mother had died broken-hearted ; I was alone in the world. But my wife discovered my intention ; and when I reached Callao, I heard that she had followed me, by way of the Isthmus of Panama, and that probably she would anticipate me in Mazatlan, where we were to stop. The thought of suicide haunted me during the rest of that horrible voyage ; only my belief that she would make it appear as a tacit confession of my guilt saved me from that last act of weakness."

He stopped and shuddered. Padre Esteban again laid his hand softly upon him.

"It was God who spared you that sacrifice of soul and body," he said gently.

"I thought it was God that suggested to me to take

the *simulation* of that act the means of separating myself from her forever. When we neared Mazatlan, I conceived the idea of hiding myself in the hold of the Excelsior until she had left that port, in the hope that it would be believed that I had fallen overboard. I succeeded in secreting myself, but was discovered at the same time that the unexpected change in the ship's destination rendered concealment unnecessary. As we did not put in at Mazatlan, nobody suspected my discovery in the hold to be anything but the accident that I gave it out to be. I felt myself saved the confrontation of the woman at Mazatlan; but I knew she would pursue me to San Francisco.

"The strange dispensation of Providence that brought us into this unknown port gave me another hope of escape and oblivion. While you and the Commander were boarding the Excelsior, I slipped from the cabin-window into the water; I was a good swimmer, and reached the shore in safety. I concealed myself in the ditch of the Presidio until I saw the passengers' boats returning with them, when I sought the safer shelter of this Mission. I made my way through a gap in the hedge and lay under your olive-trees, hearing the voices of my companions, beyond the walls, till past midnight. I then groped my way along the avenue of pear-trees till I came to another wall, and a door that opened to my accidental touch. I entered, and found myself here. You know the rest."

He had spoken with the rapid and unpent fluency of a man who cared more to relieve himself of an oppressive burden than to impress his auditor; yet the restriction of a foreign tongue had checked repetition or verbosity. Without imagination he had been eloquent; without hopefulness he had been convincing. Father Esteban rose, holding both his hands.

“My son, in the sanctuary which you have claimed there is no divorce. The woman who has ruined your life could not be your wife. As long as her first husband lives, she is forever his wife, bound by a tie which no human law can sever.”

CHAPTER IX.

AN OPEN-AIR PRISON.

AN hour after mass Father Esteban had quietly installed Hurlstone in a small cell-like apartment off the refectory. The household of the priest consisted of an old Indian woman of fabulous age and miraculous propriety, two Indian boys who served at mass, a gardener, and a muleteer. The first three, who were immediately in attendance upon the priest, were cognizant of a stranger's presence, but, under instructions from the reverend Padre, were loyally and superstitiously silent; the vocations of the gardener and muleteer made any intrusion from them impossible. A breakfast of fruit, tortillas, chocolate, and red wine, of which Hurlstone partook sparingly and only to please his entertainer, nevertheless seemed to restore his strength, as it did the Padre's equanimity. For the old man had been somewhat agitated during mass, and, except that his early morning congregation was mainly composed of Indians, muleteers, and small venders, his abstraction would have been noticed. With ready tact he had not attempted, by further questioning, to break the taciturnity into which Hurlstone had relapsed after his emotional confession and the priest's abrupt half-absolution. Was it possible he regretted his confidence, or was it possible that his first free and untrammelled expression of his wrongs had left him with a haunting doubt of their real magnitude?

"Lie down here, my son," said the old ecclesiastic, pointing to a small pallet in the corner, "and try to re-

store in the morning what you have taken from the night. Manuela will bring your clothes when they are dried and mended ; meantime, shift for yourself in Pepito's serape and calzas. I will betake me to the Comandante and the Alcalde, to learn the dispositions of your party, when the ship will sail, and if your absence is suspected. Peace be with you, son ! Manuela, attend to the caballero, and see you chatter not."

Without doubting the substantial truth of his guest's story, the good Padre Esteban was not unwilling to have it corroborated by such details as he thought he could collect among the Excelsior's passengers. His own experience in the confessional had taught him the unreliability of human evidence, and the vagaries of both conscientious and unconscious suppression. That a young, good-looking, and accomplished caballero should have been the victim of not one, but even many, erotic episodes, did not strike the holy father as being peculiar ; but that he should have been brought by a solitary unfortunate attachment to despair and renunciation of the world appeared to him marvelous. He was not unfamiliar with the remorse of certain gallants for peccadillos with other men's wives ; but this Americano's self-abasement for the sins of his own wife — as he foolishly claimed her to be — whom he hated and despised, struck Father Esteban as a miracle open to suspicion. Was there anything else in these somewhat commonplace details of vulgar and low intrigue than what he had told the priest ? Were all these Americano husbands as sensitive and as gloomily self-sacrificing and expiating ? It did not appear so from the manners and customs of the others, — from those easy matrons whose complacent husbands had abandoned them to the long companionship of youthful cavaliers on adventurous voyages ; from those audacious virgins, who had the freedom of married women. Surely, this was not

a pious and sensitive race, passionately devoted to their domestic affections ! The young stranger must be either deceiving him — or an exception to his countrymen !

And if he was that exception — what then ? An idea which had sprung up in Father Esteban's fancy that morning now took possession of it with the tenacity of a growth on fertile virgin soil. The good Father had been devoted to the conversion of the heathen with the fervor of a one-ideaed man. But his successes had been among the Indians — a guileless, harmless race, who too often confounded the practical benefits of civilization with the abstract benefits of the Church, and their instruction had been simple and coercive. There had been no necessity for argument or controversy ; the worthy priest's skill in polemical warfare and disputation had never been brought into play ; the Comandante and Alcalde were as punctiliously orthodox as himself, and the small traders and artisans were hopelessly docile and submissive. The march of science, which had been stopped by the local fogs of Todos Santos some fifty years, had not disturbed the simple *Æsculapius* of the province with heterodox theories : he still purged and bled like Sangrado, and met the priest at the deathbed of his victims with a pious satisfaction that had no trace of skeptical contention. In fact, the gentle Mission of Todos Santos had hitherto presented no field for the good Father's exalted ambition, nor the display of his powers as a zealot. And here was a splendid opportunity.

The conversion of this dark, impulsive, hysterical stranger would be a gain to the fold, and a triumph worthy of his steel. More than that, if he had judged correctly of this young man's mind and temperament, they seemed to contain those elements of courage and sacrificial devotion that indicated the missionary priesthood. With such a subaltern, what might not he, Father Esteban,

accomplish! Looking further into the future, what a glorious successor might be left to his unfinished work on Todos Santos!

Buried in these reflections, Padre Esteban sauntered leisurely up the garden, that gradually ascended the slight elevation on which the greater part of the pueblo was built. Through a low gateway in the wall he passed on to the crest of the one straggling street of Todos Santos. On either side of him were ranged the low one-storied, deep-windowed adobe fondas and artisans' dwellings, with low-pitched roofs of dull red pipe-like tiles. Absorbed in his fanciful dreams, he did not at first notice that those dwellings appeared deserted, and that even the Posada opposite him, whose courtyard was usually filled with lounging muleteers, was empty and abandoned. Looking down the street towards the plaza, he became presently aware of some undefined stirring in the peaceful hamlet. There was an unusual throng in the square, and afar on that placid surface of the bay from which the fog had lifted, the two or three fishing-boats of Todos Santos were vaguely pulling. But the strange ship was gone.

A feeling of intense relief and satisfaction followed. Father Esteban pulled out his snuff-box and took a long and complacent pinch. But his relief was quickly changed to consternation as an armed cavalcade rapidly wheeled out of the plaza and cantered towards him, with the unmistakable spectacle of the male passengers of the *Excelsior* riding two and two, and guarded by double files of dragoons on each side.

At a sign from the priest the subaltern reined in his mustang, halted the convoy, and saluted respectfully, to the astonishment of the prisoners. The clerical authority of Todos Santos evidently dominated the military. Renewed hope sprang up in the hearts of the *Excelsior* party.

"What have we here?" asked Padre Esteban.

"A revolution, your Reverence, among the Americanos, with robbery of the Presidio saluting-gun; a grave affair. Your Reverence has been sent for by the Commandante. I am taking these men to San Antonio to await the decision of the Council."

"And the ship?"

"Gone, your Reverence. One of the parties has captured it."

"And these?"

"Are the Legitimists, your Reverence: at least they have confessed to have warred with Mexico, and invaded California—the brigands."

The priest remained lost for a moment in blank and bitter amazement. Banks took advantage of the pause to edge his way to the front.

"Ask him, some of you," he said, turning to Brace and Crosby, "when this d—d farce will be over, and where we can find the head man—the boss idiot of this foolery."

"Let him put it milder," whispered Winslow. "You got us into trouble enough with your tongue already."

Crosby hesitated a moment.

"Quand finira ce drôle représentation?—et—et—qui est ce qui est l'entrepreneur?" he said dubiously.

The priest stared. These Americans were surely cooler and less excitable than his strange guest. A thought struck him.

"How many are still in the ship?" he asked gently.

"Nobody but Perkins and that piratical crew of niggers."

"And that infernal Hurlstone," added Winslow.

The priest pricked up his ears.

"Hurlstone?" he repeated.

"Yes—a passenger like ourselves, as we supposed.

But we are satisfied now he was in the conspiracy from the beginning," translated Crosby painfully.

"Look at his strange disappearance — a regular put-up job," broke in Brace, in English, without reference to the Padre's not comprehending him; "so that he and Perkins could shut themselves up together without suspicion."

"Never mind Hurlstone now; he's *gone*, and we're *here*," said Banks angrily. "Ask the parson, as a gentleman and a Christian, what sort of a hole we've got into, anyhow. How far is the next settlement?"

Crosby put the question. The subaltern lit a cigarette.

"There is no next settlement. The pueblo ends at San Antonio."

"And what's beyond that?"

"The ocean."

"And what's south?"

"The desert — one cannot pass it."

"And north?"

"The desert."

"And east?"

"The desert too."

"Then how do you get away from here?"

"We do not get away."

"And how do you communicate with Mexico — with your Government?"

"When a ship comes."

"And when does a ship come?"

"Quien sabe?"

The officer threw away his cigarette.

"I say, you'll tell the Commander that all this is illegal; and that I'm going to complain to our Government," continued Banks hurriedly.

"I go to speak to the Comandante," responded the priest gravely.

"And tell him that if he touches a hair of the ladies'

heads we'll have his own scalp," interrupted Brace impetuously.

Even Crosby's diplomatic modification of this speech did not appear entirely successful.

"The Mexican soldier wars not with women," said the priest coldly. "Adieu, messieurs!"

The cavalcade moved on. The Excelsior passengers at once resumed their chorus of complaint, tirade, and aggressive suggestion, heedless of the soldiers who rode stolidly on each side.

"To think we have n't got a single revolver among us," said Brace despairingly.

"We might each grab a carbine from these nigger fellows," said Crosby, eying them contemptively.

"And if they did n't burst, and we were n't shot by the next patrol, and if we'd calculated to be mean enough to run away from the women — where would we escape to?" asked Banks curtly. "Hold on at least until we get an ultimatum from that commodious ass at the Presidio! Then we'll anticipate the fool-killer, if you like. My opinion is, they are n't in any great hurry to try *anything* on us just yet."

"And I say, lie low and keep dark until they show their hand," added Winslow, who had no relish for an indiscriminate scrimmage, and had his own ideas of placating their captors.

Nevertheless, by degrees they fell into a silence, partly the effect of the strangely enervating air. The fog had completely risen from the landscape, and hung high in mid-air, through which an intense sun, shorn of its fierceness, diffused a lambent warmth, and a yellowish, unctuous light, as if it had passed through amber. The bay gleamed clearly and distinctly; not a shadow flecked its surface to the gray impenetrable rampart of fog that stretched like a granite wall before its entrance. On one

side of the narrow road billows of monstrous grain undulated to the crest of the low hills, that looked like larger undulations of the soil, furrowed by bosky cañadas or shining arroyos. Banks was startled into a burst of professional admiration.

"There's enough grain there to feed a thousand Todos Santos ; and raised, too, with tools like that," he continued, pointing to a primitive plow that lay on the wayside, formed by a single forked root. A passing ox-cart, whose creaking wheels were made of a solid circle of wood, apparently sawn from an ordinary log, again plunged him into cogitation. Here and there little areas of the rudest cultivation broke into a luxuriousness of orange, lime, and fig trees. The joyous earth at the slightest provocation seemed to smile and dimple with fruit and flowers. Everywhere the rare beatitudes of Todos Santos revealed and repeated its simple story. The fructifying influence of earth and sky ; the intervention of a vaporous veil between a fiery sun and fiery soil ; the combination of heat and moisture, purified of feverish exhalations, and made sweet and wholesome by the saline breath of the mighty sea, had been the beneficent legacy of their isolation, the munificent compensation of their oblivion.

A gradual and gentle ascent at the end of two hours brought the cavalcade to a halt upon a rugged upland with semi-tropical shrubbery, and here and there larger trees from the tierra templada in the evergreens or madero. A few low huts and corrals, and a rambling hacienda, were scattered along the crest, and in the midst arose a little votive chapel, flanked by pear-trees. Near the roadside were the crumbling edges of some long-forgotten excavation. Crosby gazed at it curiously. Touching the arm of the officer, he pointed to it.

"Una mina de plata," said the officer sententiously.

"A mine of some kind — silver, I bet!" said Crosby, turning to the others. "Is it good — bueno — you know?" he continued to the officer, with vague gesticulations.

"En tiempos pasados," returned the officer gravely.

"I wonder what that means?" said Winslow.

But before Crosby could question further, the subaltern signaled to them to dismount. They did so, and their horses were led away to a little declivity, whence came the sound of running water. Left to themselves, the Americans looked around them. The cavalcade seemed to have halted near the edge of a precipitous ridge, the evident termination of the road. But the view that here met their eyes was unexpected and startling.

The plateau on which they stood seemed to drop suddenly away, leaving them on the rocky shore of a monotonous and far-stretching sea of waste and glittering sand. Not a vestige nor trace of vegetation could be seen, except an occasional ridge of straggling pallid bushes, raised in hideous simulation of the broken crest of a ghostly wave. On either side, as far as the eye could reach, the hollow empty vision extended — the interminable desert stretched and panted before them.

"It's the jumping-off place, I reckon," said Crosby, "and they've brought us here to show us how small is our chance of getting away. But," he added, turning towards the plateau again, "what are they doing now? 'Pon my soul! I believe they're going off — and leaving us."

The others turned as he spoke. It was true. The dragoons were coolly galloping off the way they came, taking with them the horses the Americans had just ridden.

"I call that cool," said Crosby. "It looks deuced like as if we were to be left here to graze, like cattle."

"Perhaps that's their idea of a prison in this country," said Banks. "There's certainly no chance of our breaking jail in that direction," he added, pointing to the desert; "and we can't follow them without horses."

"And I dare say they've guarded the pass in the road lower down," said Winslow.

"We ought to be able to hold our own here until night," said Brace, "and then make a dash into Todos Santos, get hold of some arms, and join the ladies."

"The women are all right," said Crosby impatiently, "and are better treated than if we were with them. Suppose, instead of maundering over them, we reconnoitre and see what *we* can do here. I'm getting devilishly hungry; they can't mean to starve us, and if they do, I don't intend to be starved as long as there is anything to be had by buying or stealing. Come along. There's sure to be fruit near that old chapel, and I saw some chickens in the bush near those huts. First, let's see if there's any one about. I don't see a soul."

The little plateau, indeed, seemed deserted. In vain they shouted; their voices were lost in the echoless air. They examined one by one the few thatched huts: they were open, contained one or two rude articles of furniture—a bed, a bench, and table—were scrupulously clean—and empty. They next inspected the chapel; it was tawdry and barbaric in ornament, but the candlesticks and crucifix and the basin for holy water were of heavily beaten silver. The same thought crossed their minds—the abandoned mine at the roadside!

Bananas, oranges, and prickly-pears growing within the cactus-hedge of the chapel partly mollified their thirst and hunger, and they turned their steps towards the long, rambling, barrack-looking building, with its low windows and red-tiled roof, which they had first noticed. Here, too, the tenement was deserted and abandoned; but there

was evidence of some previous and more ambitious preparation: in a long dormitory off the corridor a number of scrupulously clean beds were ranged against the white-washed walls, with spotless benches and tables. To the complete astonishment and bewilderment of the party another room, fitted up as a kitchen, with the simpler appliances of housekeeping, revealed a larder filled with provisions and meal. A shout from Winslow, who had penetrated the inner courtyard, however, drew them to a more remarkable spectacle. Their luggage and effects from the cabins of the *Excelsior* were there, carefully piled in the antique ox-cart that had evidently that morning brought them from Todos Santos!

"There's no mistake," said Brace, with a relieved look, after a hurried survey of the trunks. "They have only brought our baggage. The ladies have evidently had the opportunity of selecting their own things."

"Crosby told you they'd be all right," said Banks; "and as for ourselves, I don't see why we can't be pretty comfortable here, and all the better for our being alone. I shall take an opportunity of looking around a bit. It strikes me that there are some resources in this country that might pay to develop."

"And I shall have a look at that played-out mine," said Crosby; "if it's been worked as they work the land, they've left about as much in it as they've taken out."

"That's all well enough," said Brace, drawing a dull vermilion-colored stone from his pocket; "but here's something I picked up just now that ain't 'played out,' nor even the value of it suspected by those fellows. That's cinnabar — quicksilver ore — and a big per cent. of it too; and if there's as much of it here as the indications show, you could buy up all your *silver* mines in the country with it."

"If I were you, I'd put up a notice on a post some-

where, as they do in California, and claim discovery," said Banks seriously. "There's no knowing how this thing may end. We may not get away from here for some time yet, and if the Government will sell the place cheap, it would n't be a bad spec' to buy it. Form a kind of 'Excelsior Company' among ourselves, you know, and go shares."

The four men looked earnestly at each other. Already the lost Excelsior and her mutinous crew were forgotten; even the incidents of the morning — their arrest, the uncertainty of their fate, and the fact that they were in the hands of a hostile community — appeared but as trivial preliminaries to the new life that opened before them! They suddenly became graver than they had ever been — even in the moment of peril.

"I don't see why we should n't," said Brace quickly. "We started out to do that sort of thing in California, and I reckon if we'd found such a spot as this on the Sacramento or American River we'd have been content. We can take turns at housekeeping, prospect a little, and enter into negotiations with the Government. I'm for offering them a fair sum for this ridge and all it contains at once."

"The only thing against that," said Crosby slowly, "is the probability that it is already devoted to some other use by the Government. Ever since we've been here I've been thinking — I don't know why — that we've been put in a sort of quarantine. The desertion of the place, the half hospital arrangements of this building, and the means they have taken to isolate us from themselves, must mean something. I've read somewhere that in these out-of-the-way spots in the tropics they have a place where they put the fellows with malarious or contagious diseases. I don't want to frighten you boys: but I've an idea that we're in a sort of lazaretto, and the people outside won't trouble us often."

CHAPTER X.

TODOS SANTOS SOLVES THE MYSTERY.

NOTWITHSTANDING his promise, and the summons of the Council, Father Esteban, on parting with the Excelsior prisoners in the San Antonio Road, did not proceed immediately to the presence of the Comandante. Partly anxious to inform himself more thoroughly regarding Hurlstone's antecedents before entering upon legislative functions that might concern him, partly uneasy at Brace's allusion to any possible ungentleness in the treatment of the fair Americanas, and partly apprehensive that Mrs. Brimmer might seek him at the Mission in the present emergency, the good Father turned his steps towards the Alcalde's house.

Mrs. Brimmer, in a becoming morning wrapper, half reclining in an Indian hammock in the corridor, supported by Miss Chubb, started at his approach. So did the young Alcalde, sympathetically seated at her side. Padre Esteban for an instant was himself embarrassed; Mrs. Brimmer quickly recovered her usual bewildering naïveté.

"I knew you would come; but if you had n't, I should have mustered courage enough to go with Miss Chubb to find you at the Mission," she said, half coquettishly. "Not but that Don Ramon has been all kindness and consideration, but you know one always clings to one's spiritual adviser in such an emergency; and although there are differences of opinion between us, I think I may speak to you as freely as I would speak to my dear

friend Dr. Potts, of Trinity Chapel. Of course you don't know *him*; but you could n't have helped liking him, he's so gentle, so tactful, so refined! But do tell me the fullest particulars of this terrible calamity that has happened so awkwardly. Tell me all! I fear that Don Ramon, out of kindness, has not told me everything. *I* have been perfectly frank, *I* told him everything — who I am, who Mr. Brimmer is, and given him even the connections of my friend Miss Chubb. I can do no more; but you will surely have no difficulty in finding some one in Todos Santos who has heard of the Quincys and Brimmers. I've no doubt that there are books in your library that mention them. Of course I can say nothing of the other passengers, except that Mr. Brimmer would not have probably permitted me to associate with any notorious persons. I confess now — I think I told you once before, Clarissa — that I greatly doubted Captain Bunker's ability" —

"Ah," murmured Don Ramon.

"— To make a social selection," continued Mrs. Brimmer. "He may have been a good sailor, and boxed his compass, but he lacked a knowledge of the world. Of the other passengers I can truly say I know nothing; I cannot think that Mr. Crosby's sense of humor led him into bad associations, or that he ever went beyond verbal impropriety. Certainly nothing in Miss Keene's character has led me to believe she could so far forget what was due to herself and to us as to address a lawless mob in the streets as she did just now; although her friend Mrs. Markham, as I just told Don Ramon, is an advocate of Women's Rights and Female Suffrage, and I believe she contemplates addressing the public from the lecturer's platform."

"It is n't possible!" interrupted Don Ramon excitedly, in mingled horror of the masculinely rampant Mrs.

Markham and admiration of the fascinatingly feminine Mrs. Brimmer; "a lady cannot be an orator—a haranguer of men!"

"Not in society," responded Mrs. Brimmer, with a sigh, "and I do not remember to have met the lady before. The fact is, she does not move in our circle—in the upper classes."

The Alcalde exchanged a glance with the Padre.

"Ah! you have classes? and she is of a distinct class, perhaps?"

"Decidedly," said Mrs. Brimmer promptly.

"Pardon me," said Padre Esteban, with gentle persuasiveness, "but you are speaking of your fellow-passengers. Know you not, then, of one Hurlstone, who is believed to be still in the ship *Excelsior*, and perhaps of the party who seized it?"

"Mr. Hurlstone?—it is possible; but I know really nothing of him," said Mrs. Brimmer carelessly. "I don't think Clarissa did, either—did you, dear? Even in our enforced companionship we had to use some reserve, and we may have drawn the line at him! He was a friend of Miss Keene's; indeed, she was the only one who seemed to know him."

"And she is now here?" asked the Padre eagerly.

"No. She is with her friend the Señora Markham, at the Presidio. The Comandante has given her the disposition of his house," said Don Ramon, with a glance of grave archness at Mrs. Brimmer; "it is not known which is the most favored, the eloquent orator or the beautiful and daring leader!"

"Mrs. Markham is a married woman," said Mrs. Brimmer severely, "and, of course, she can do as she pleases; but it is far different with Miss Keene. I should scarcely consider it proper to expose Miss Chubb to the hospitality of a single man, without other women,

and I cannot understand how she could leave the companionship and protection of your lovely sisters."

The priest here rose, and, with formal politeness, excused himself, urging the peremptory summons of the Council.

"I scarcely expected, indeed, to have had the pleasure of seeing my colleague here," he added with quiet suavity, turning to the Alcalde.

"I have already expressed my views to the Comandante," said the official, with some embarrassment, "and my attendance will hardly be required."

The occasional misleading phosphorescence of Mrs. Brimmer's quiet eyes, early alluded to in these pages, did not escape Father Esteban's quick perception at that moment; however, he preferred to leave his companion to follow its aberrations rather than to permit that fair *ignis fatuus* to light him on his way by it.

"But my visit to you, Father Esteban," she began sweetly, "is only postponed."

"Until I have the pleasure of anticipating it here," said the priest, with paternal politeness bending before the two ladies; "but for the present, au revoir!"

"It would be an easy victory to win this discreetly emotional Americana to the Church," said Father Esteban to himself, as he crossed the plaza; "but, if I mistake not, she would not cease to be a disturbing element even there. However, she is not such as would give this Hurlstone any trouble. It seems I must look elsewhere for the brains of this party, and to find a solution of this young man's mystery; and, if I judge correctly, it is with this beautiful young agitator of revolutions and her oratorical duenna I must deal."

He entered the low gateway of the Presidio unchallenged, and even traversed the courtyard without meeting a soul. The guard and sentries had evidently withdrawn

to their habitual peaceful vocations, and the former mediæval repose of the venerable building had returned. There was no one in the guard-room ; but as the priest turned back to the corridor, his quick ear was suddenly startled by the unhallowed and inconsistent sounds of a guitar. A monotonous voice also — the Comandante's evidently — was raised in a thin, high recitative.

The Padre passed hastily through the guard-room, and opened the door of the passage leading to the garden slope. Here an extraordinary group presented itself to his astonished eyes. In the shadow of a palm-tree, Mrs. Markham, seated on her Saratoga trunk as on a throne, was gazing blandly down upon the earnest features of the Commander, who, at her feet, guitar in hand, was evidently repeating some musical composition. His subaltern sat near him, divided in admiration of his chief and the guest. Miss Keene, at a little distance, aided by the secretary, was holding an animated conversation with a short, stout, Sancho Panza-looking man, whom the Padre recognized as the doctor of Todos Santos.

At the apparition of the reverend Father, the Commander started, the subaltern stared, and even the secretary and the doctor looked discomposed.

"I am decidedly *de trop* this morning," soliloquized the ecclesiastic ; but Miss Keene cut short his reflection by running to him frankly, with outstretched hand.

"I am so glad that you have come," she said, with a youthful, unrestrained earnestness that was as convincing as it was fascinating, "for you will help me to persuade this gentleman that poor Captain Bunker is suffering more from excitement of mind than body, and that bleeding him is more than folly."

"The man's veins are in a burning fever and delirium from aguardiente," said the little doctor excitedly, "and the fire must first be put out by the lancet."

"He is only crazy with remorse for having lost his ship through his own carelessness and the treachery of others," said Miss Keene doughtily.

"He is a maniac and will kill himself, unless his fever is subdued," persisted the doctor.

"And you would surely kill him by your way of subduing it," said the young girl boldly. "Better for him, a disgraced man of honor, to die by his own hand, than to be bled like a calf into a feeble and helpless dissolution. I would, if I were in his place — if I had to do it by tearing off the bandages."

She made a swift, half unconscious gesture of her little hand, and stopped, her beautiful eyes sparkling, her thin pink nostrils dilated, her red lips parted, her round throat lifted in the air, and one small foot advanced before her. The men glanced hurriedly at each other, and then fixed their eyes upon her with a rapt yet frightened admiration. To their simple minds it was Anarchy and Revolution personified, beautiful, and victorious.

"Ah!" said the secretary to Padre Esteban, in Spanish, "it is true! she knows not fear! She was in the room alone with the madman; he would let none approach but her! She took a knife from him — else the medico had suffered!"

"He recognized her, you see! Ah! they know her power," said the Comandante, joining the group.

"You will help me, Father Esteban?" said the young girl, letting the fire of her dark eyes soften to a look of almost childish appeal — "you will help me to intercede for him? It is the restraint only that is killing him — that is goading him to madness! Think of him, Father — think of him: ruined and disgraced, dying to retrieve himself by any reckless action, any desperate chance of recovery, and yet locked up where he can do nothing — attempt nothing — not even lift a hand to pursue the man who has helped to bring him to this!"

"But he *can* do nothing! The ship is gone!" remonstrated the Comandante.

"Yes, the ship is gone; but the ocean is still there," said Miss Keene.

"But he has no boat."

"He will find or make one."

"And the fog conceals the channel."

"He can go where *they* have gone, or meet their fate. You do not know my countrymen, Señor Comandante," she said proudly.

"Ah, yes — pardon! They are at San Antonio — the baker, the buffoon, the two young men who dig. They are already baking and digging and joking. We have it from my officer, who has just returned."

Miss Keene bit her pretty lips.

"They think it is a mistake; they cannot believe that any intentional indignity is offered them," she said quietly. "Perhaps it is well they do not."

"They desired me to express their condolences to the Señora," said the Padre, with exasperating gentleness, "and were relieved to be assured by me of your perfect security in the hands of these gentlemen."

Miss Keene raised her clear eyes to the ecclesiastic. That accomplished diplomat of Todos Santos absolutely felt confused under the cool scrutiny of this girl's unbiased and unsophisticated intelligence.

"Then you *have* seen them," she said, "and you know their innocence, and the utter absurdity of this surveillance?"

"I have not seen them *all*," said the priest softly. "There is still another — a Señor Hurlstone — who is missing? Is he not?"

It was not in the possibility of Eleanor Keene's truthful blood to do other than respond with a slight color to this question. She had already concealed from every one

the fact of having seen the missing man in the Mission garden the evening before. It did not, however, prevent her the next moment from calmly meeting the glance of the priest as she answered gravely, —

“I believe so. But I cannot see what that has to do with the detention of the others.”

“Much, perhaps. It has been said that you alone, my child, were in the confidence of this man.”

“Who dared say that?” exclaimed Miss Keene in English, forgetting herself in her indignation.

“If it’s anything mean — it’s Mrs. Brimmer, I’ll bet a cooky,” said Mrs. Markham, whose linguistic deficiencies had debarred her from the previous conversation.

“You have only,” continued the priest, without noticing the interruption, “to tell us what you know of this Hurlstone’s plans, — of his complicity with Señor Perkins, or,” he added significantly, “his opposition to them — to insure that perfect justice shall be done to all.”

Relieved that the question involved no disclosure of her only secret regarding Hurlstone, Miss Keene was about to repeat the truth that she had no confidential knowledge of him, or of his absurd alleged connection with Señor Perkins, when, with an instinct of tact, she hesitated. Might she not serve them all — even Hurlstone himself — by saying nothing, and leaving the burden of proof to their idiotic accusers? Was she altogether sure that Hurlstone was entirely ignorant of Señor Perkins’ plans, or might he not have refused, at the last moment, to join in the conspiracy, and so left the ship?

“I will not press you for your answer now,” said the priest gently. “But you will not, I know, keep back anything that may throw a light on this sad affair, and perhaps help to reinstate your friend Mr. Hurlstone in his *real* position.”

“If you ask me if I believe that Mr. Hurlstone had

anything to do with this conspiracy, I should say, unhesitatingly, that I do *not*. And more, I believe that he would have jumped overboard rather than assent to so infamous an act," said the young girl boldly.

"Then you think he had no other motive for leaving the ship?" said the priest slowly.

"Decidedly not." She stopped; a curious anxious look in the Padre's persistent eyes both annoyed and frightened her. "What other motive could he have?" she said coldly.

Father Esteban's face lightened.

"I only ask because I think you would have known it. Thank you for the assurance all the same, and in return I promise you I will use my best endeavors with the Comandante for your friend the Captain Bunker. Adieu, my daughter. Adieu, Madame Markham," he said, as, taking the arm of Don Miguel, he turned with him and the doctor towards the guard-room. The secretary lingered behind for a moment.

"Fear nothing," he said, in whispered English to Miss Keene. "I, Ruy Sanchez, shall make you free of Capitano Bunker's cell," and passed on.

"Well," said Mrs. Markham, when the two women were alone again. "I don't pretend to fathom the befogged brains of Todos Santos; but as far as I can understand their grown-up child's play, they are making believe this unfortunate Mr. Hurlstone, who may be dead for all we know, is in revolt against the United States Government, which is supposed to be represented by Señor Perkins and the Excelsior — think of that!"

"But Perkins signed himself of the Quinquambo navy!" said Miss Keene wonderingly.

"That is firmly believed by those idiots to be one of *our* States. Remember they know nothing of what has happened anywhere in the last fifty years. I dare say

they never heard of filibusters like Perkins, and they could n't comprehend him if they had. I've given up trying to enlighten them, and I think they're grateful for it. It makes their poor dear heads ache."

"And it is turning mine! But, for Heaven's sake, tell me what part I am supposed to act in this farce!" said Miss Keene.

"You are the friend and colleague of Hurlstone, don't you see?" said Mrs. Markham. "You are two beautiful young patriots — don't blush, my dear! — endeared to each other and a common cause, and ready to die for your country in opposition to Perkins, and the faint-heartedness of such neutrals as Mrs. Brimmer, Miss Chubb, the poor Captain, and all the men whom they have packed off to San Antonio."

"Impossible!" said Miss Keene, yet with an uneasy feeling that it not only was possible, but that she herself had contributed something to the delusion. "But how do they account for my friendship with *you* — you, who are supposed to be a correspondent — an accomplice of Perkins?"

"No, no," returned Mrs. Markham, with a half serious smile, "*I* am not allowed that honor. *I* am presumed to be only the disconsolate Dulcinea of Perkins, abandoned by *him*, pitied by you, and converted to the true faith — at least, that is what I make out from the broken English of that little secretary of the Commander."

Miss Keene winced.

"That's all my fault, dear," she said, suddenly entwining her arms round Mrs. Markham, and hiding her half embarrassed smile on the shoulder of her strong-minded friend; "they suggested it to me, and I half assented, to save you. Please forgive me."

"Don't think I am blaming you, my dear Eleanor," said Mrs. Markham. "For Heaven's sake assent to the

wildest and most extravagant hypothesis they can offer, if it will leave us free to arrange our own plans for getting away. I begin to think we were not a very harmonious party on the Excelsior, and most of our troubles here are owing to that. We forget we have fallen among a lot of original saints, as guileless and as unsophisticated as our first parents, who know nothing of our customs and antecedents. They have accepted us on what they believe to be our own showing. From first to last we've underrated them, forgetting they are in the majority. We can't expect to correct the ignorance of fifty years in twenty-four hours, and I, for one, sha'n't attempt it. I'd much rather trust to the character those people would conceive of me from their own consciousness than to one Mrs. Brimmer or Mr. Winslow would give of me. From this moment I've taken a firm resolve to leave my reputation and the reputation of my friends entirely in their hands. If you are wise you will do the same. They are inclined to worship you — don't hinder them. My belief is, if we only take things quietly, we might find worse places to be stranded on than Todos Santos. If Mrs. Brimmer and those men of ours, who, I dare say, have acted as silly as the Mexicans themselves, will only be quiet, we can have our own way here yet."

"And poor Captain Bunker?" said Miss Keene.

"It seems hard to say it, but, in my opinion, he is better under lock and key, for everybody's good, at present. He'd be a firebrand in the town if he got away. Meantime, let us go to our room. It is about the time when everybody is taking a siesta, and for two hours, thank Heaven! we're certain nothing more can happen."

"I'll join you in a moment," said Miss Keene.

Her quick ear had caught the sound of voices approaching. As Mrs. Markham disappeared in the passage, the Commander and his party reappeared from the

guard-room, taking leave of Padre Esteban. The secretary, as he passed Miss Keene, managed to add to his formal salutation the whispered words, — "When the Angelus rings I will await you before the grating of his prison."

Padre Esteban was too preoccupied to observe this incident. As soon as he quitted the Presidio, he hastened to the Mission with a disquieting fear that his strange guest might have vanished. But, crossing the silent refectory, and opening the door of the little apartment, he was relieved to find him stretched on the pallet in a profound slumber. The peacefulness of the venerable walls had laid a gentle finger on his weary eyelids.

The Padre glanced round the little cell, and back again at the handsome suffering face that seemed to have found surcease and rest in the narrow walls, with a stirring of regret. But the next moment he awakened the sleeper, and in the briefest, almost frigid, sentences, related the events of the morning.

The young man rose to his feet with a bitter laugh.

"You see," he said, "God is against me! And yet a few hours ago I dared to think that He had guided me to a haven of rest and forgetfulness!"

"Have you told the truth to him and to me?" said the priest sternly, "or have you — a mere political refugee — taken advantage of an old man's weakness to forge a foolish lie of sentimental passion?"

"What do you mean?" said Hurlstone, turning upon him almost fiercely.

The priest rose, and drawing a folded paper from his bosom, opened it before the eyes of his indignant guest.

"Remember what you told me last night in the sacred confidences of yonder holy church, and hear what you really are from the lips of the Council of Todos Santos."

Smoothing out the paper, he read slowly as follows:—

“Whereas, it being presented to an Emergency Council, held at the Presidio of Todos Santos, that the foreign barque *Excelsior* had mutinied, discharged her captain and passengers, and escaped from the waters of the bay, it was, on examination, found and decreed that the said barque was a vessel primarily owned by a foreign Power, then and there confessed and admitted to be at war with Mexico and equipped to invade one of her northern provinces. But that the God of Liberty and Justice awakening in the breasts of certain patriots—to wit, the heroic Señor Diego Hurlstone and the invincible Doña Leonor—the courage and discretion to resist the tyranny and injustice of their oppressors, caused them to mutiny and abandon the vessel rather than become accomplices, in the company of certain neutral and non-combatant traders and artisans, severally known as Brace, Banks, Winslow, and Crosby; and certain aristocrats, known as Señoras Brimmer and Chubb. In consideration thereof, it is decreed by the Council of Todos Santos that asylum, refuge, hospitality, protection, amity, and alliance be offered and extended to the patriots, Señor Diego Hurlstone, Doña Leonor, and a certain Duenna Susana Markham, particularly attached to Doña Leonor’s person; and that war, reprisal, banishment, and death be declared against Señor Perkins, his unknown aiders and abettors. And that for the purposes of probation, and in the interests of clemency, provisional parole shall be extended to the alleged neutrals—Brace, Banks, Crosby, and Winslow—within the limits and boundaries of the lazaretto of San Antonio, until their neutrality shall be established, and pending the further pleasure of the Council. And it is further decreed and declared that one Capitano Bunker, formerly of the *Excelsior*, but now a maniac and lunatic—being irresponsible and visited of God, shall be exempted from the ordinances of this decree until his reason

shall be restored ; and during that interval subjected to the ordinary remedial and beneficent restraint of civilization and humanity. By order of the Council, —

“ The signatures and rubrics of —

“ DON MIGUEL BRIONES,
Comandante.

“ PADRE ESTEBAN,
of the Order of San Francisco d'Assisis.

“ DON RAMON RAMIREZ,
Alcalde of the Pueblo of Todos Santos.”

CHAPTER XI.

THE CAPTAIN FOLLOWS HIS SHIP.

WHEN Padre Esteban had finished reading the document he laid it down and fixed his eyes on the young man. Hurlstone met his look with a glance of impatient disdain.

"What have you to say to this?" asked the ecclesiastic, a little impressed by his manner.

"That as far as it concerns myself it is a farrago of absurdity. If I were the person described there, why should I have sought you with what you call a lie of 'sentimental passion,' when I could have claimed protection openly with my *sister patriot*," he added, with a bitter laugh.

"Because you did not know *then* the sympathy of the people nor the decision of the Council," said the priest.

"But I know it *now*, and I refuse to accept it."

"You refuse — to — to accept it?" echoed the priest.

"I do." He walked towards the door. "Before I go, let me thank you for the few hours' rest and security that you have given to one who may be a cursed man, yet is no impostor. But I do not blame you for doubting one who talks like a desperate man, yet lacks the courage of desperation. Good-by!"

"Where are you going?"

"What matters? There is a safer protection and security to be found than even that offered by the Council of Todos Santos."

His eyes were averted, but not before the priest had

seen them glaze again with the same gloomy absorption that had horrified him in the church the evening before. Father Esteban stepped forward and placed his soft hand on Hurlstone's shoulder.

"Look at me. Don't turn your face aside, but hear me; for I believe your story."

Without raising his eyes, the young man lifted Father Esteban's hand from his shoulder, pressed it lightly, and put it quietly aside.

"I thank you," he said, "for keeping at least that unstained memory of me. But it matters little now. Good-by!"

He had his hand upon the door, but the priest again withheld him.

"When I tell you I believe your story, it is only to tell you more. I believe that God has directed your wayward, wandering feet here to His house, that you may lay down the burden of your weak and suffering manhood before His altar, and become once more a child of His. I stand here to offer you, not a refuge of a day or a night, but for all time; not a hiding-place from man or woman, but from yourself, my son — yourself, your weak and mortal self, more fatal to you than all. I stand here to open for you not only the door of this humble cell, but that of His yonder blessed mansion. You shall share my life with me; you shall be one of my disciples; you shall help me strive for other souls as I have striven for yours; the protection of the Church, which is all-powerful, shall be around you if you wish to be known; you shall hide yourself in its mysteries if you wish to be forgotten. You shall be my child, my companion, my friend; all that my age can give you shall be yours while I live, and it shall be your place one day to take up my unfinished work when it falls from these palsied hands forever."

"You are mistaken," said the young man coldly. "I

came to you for human aid, and thank you for what you have granted me : I have not been presumptuous enough to ask more, nor to believe myself a fitting subject for conversion. I am weak, but not weak enough to take advantage of the mistaken kindness of either the temporal Council of Todos Santos or its spiritual head." He opened the door leading into the garden. "Forget and forgive me, Father Esteban, and let me say farewell."

"Stop!" said the ecclesiastic, raising himself to his full height and stepping before Hurlstone. "Then if you will not hear me in the name of your Father who lives, in the name of your father who is dead I command you to stay! I stand here to-day in the place of that man I never knew—to hold back his son from madness and crime. Think of me as of him whom you loved, and grant to an old man who might have had a son as old as you the right of throwing a father's protecting arm around you."

There was a moment's silence.

"What do you want me to do?" said Hurlstone, suddenly lifting his now moist and glistening eyes upon the old man.

"Give me your word of honor that for twenty-four hours you will remain as you are—pledging yourself to nothing—only promising to commit no act, take no step, without consulting me. You will not be sought here, nor yet need you keep yourself a prisoner in these gloomy walls—except that, by exposing yourself to the people now, you might be compromised to some course that you are not ready to take."

"I promise," said Hurlstone.

He turned and held out both his hands ; but Father Esteban anticipated him with a paternal gesture of uplifted and opened arms, and for an instant the young man's forehead was bowed on the priest's shoulder.

Father Esteban gently raised the young man's head.

"You will take a *pasear* in the garden until the Angelus rings, my son, while the air is sweet and wholesome, and think this over. Remember that you may accept the hospitality of the Council without sin of deception. You were not in sympathy with either the captors of the *Excelsior* or their defeated party; for you would have flown from both. You, of all your party now in Todos Santos, are most in sympathy with us. You have no cause to love your own people; you have abandoned them for us. Go, my son; and meditate upon my words. I will fetch you from yonder slope in time for the evening refec-tion."

Hurlstone bowed his head and turned his irresolute feet towards the upper extremity of the garden, indicated by the priest, which seemed to offer more seclusion and security than the avenue of pear-trees. He was dazed and benumbed. The old dogged impulses of self-destruction — revived by the priest's reproaches, but checked by the vision of his dead and forgotten father, which the priest's words had called up — gave way, in turn, to his former despair. With it came a craving for peace and rest so insidious that in some vague fear of yielding to it he quickened his pace, as if to increase his distance from the church and its apostle. He was almost out of breath when he reached the summit, and turned to look back upon the Mission buildings and the straggling street of the pueblo, which now for the first time he saw skirted the wall of the garden in its descent towards the sea. He had not known the full extent of Todos Santos before; when he swam ashore he had landed under a crumbling outwork of the fort; he gazed now with curious interest over the hamlet that might have been his home. He looked over the red-tiled roofs, and further on to the shining bay, shut in by the impenetrable rampart of fog.

He might have found rest and oblivion here but for the intrusion of those fellow-passengers to share his exile and make it intolerable. How he hated and loathed them all! Yet the next moment he found himself scrutinizing the street and plaza below him for a glimpse of his countrywomen, whom he knew were still in the town or vainly endeavoring to locate their habitation among the red-tiled roofs. And that frank, clear-eyed girl — Miss Keene! — she who had seemed to vaguely pity him — she was somewhere here too — selected by the irony of fate to be his confederate! He could not help thinking of her beauty and kindness now, with a vague curiosity that was half an uneasiness. It had not struck him before, but if he were to accept the ridiculous attitude forced upon him by Todos Santos, its absurdity, as well as its responsibility, would become less odious by sharing it with another. Perhaps it might be to *her* advantage — and if so, would he be justified in exposing its absurdity? He would have to see her first — and if he did, how would he explain his real position? A returning wave of bitterness threw him back into his old despair.

The twilight had slowly gathered over the view as he gazed — or, rather a luminous concentration above the pueblo and bay had left the outer circle of fog denser and darker. Emboldened by the apparent desertion of the Embarcadero, he began to retrace his steps down the slope, keeping close to the wall so as to avoid passing before the church again, or a closer contact with the gardener among the vines. In this way he reached the path he had skirted the night before, and stopped almost under the shadow of the Alcalde's house. It was here he had rested and hidden, — here he had tasted the first sweets of isolation and oblivion in the dreamy garden, — here he had looked forward to peace with the passing of the ship, — and now? The sound of voices and laughter

suddenly grated upon his ear. He had heard those voices before. Their distinctness startled him until he became aware that he was standing before a broken, half-rotting door that permitted a glimpse of the courtyard of the neighboring house. He glided quickly past it without pausing, but in that glimpse beheld Mrs. Brimmer and Miss Chubb half reclining in the corridor—in the attitude he had often seen them on the deck of the ship—talking and laughing with a group of Mexican gallants. A feeling of inconceivable loathing and aversion took possession of him. Was it to *this* he was returning after his despairing search for oblivion? Their empty, idle laughter seemed to ring mockingly in his ears as he hurried on, scarce knowing whither, until he paused before the broken cactus hedge and crumbling wall that faced the Embarcadero. A glance over the hedge showed him that the strip of beach was deserted. He looked up the narrow street; it was empty. A few rapid strides across it gained him the shadow of the sea-wall of the Presidio, unchecked and unhindered. The ebbing tide had left a foot or two of narrow shingle between the sea and the wall. He crept along this until, a hundred yards distant, the sea-wall reëntered inland around a bastion at the entrance of a moat half filled at high tide by the waters of the bay, but now a ditch of shallow pools, sand, and débris. He leaned against the bastion, and looked over the softly darkening water.

How quiet it looked, and, under that vaporous veil, how profound and inscrutable! How easy to slip into its all-embracing arms, and sink into its yielding bosom, leaving behind no stain, trace, or record! A surer oblivion than the Church, which could not absolve memory, grant forgetfulness, nor even hide the ghastly footprints of its occupants. Here was obliteration. But was he sure of that? He thought of the body of the murdered

Peruvian, laid out at the feet of the Council by this same fickle and uncertain sea ; he thought of his own distorted face subjected to the cold curiosity of these aliens or the contemptuous pity of his countrymen. But that could be avoided. It was easy for him — a good swimmer — to reach a point far enough out in the channel for the ebbing tides to carry him past that barrier of fog into the open and obliterating ocean. And then, at least, it might seem as if he had attempted to *escape* — indeed, if he cared, he might be able to keep afloat until he was picked up by some passing vessel, bound to a distant land ! The self-delusion pleased him, and seemed to add the clinching argument to his resolution. It was not suicide ; it was escape — certainly no more than escape — he intended ! And this miserable sophism of self-apology, the last flashes of expiring conscience, helped to light up his pale, determined face with satisfaction. He began coolly to divest himself of his coat.

What was that ? — the sound of some dislodged stones splashing in one of the pools further up ! He glanced hurriedly round the wall of the bastion. A figure crouching against the side of the ditch, as if concealing itself from observation on the glacis above, was slowly approaching the sea. Suddenly, when within a hundred yards of Hurlstone, it turned, crossed the ditch, rapidly mounted its crumbling sides, and disappeared over the crest. But in that hurried glimpse he had recognized Captain Bunker !

The sudden and mysterious apparition of this man produced on Hurlstone an effect that the most violent opposition could not have created. Without a thought of the terrible purpose it had interrupted, and obeying some stronger instinct that had seized him, he dashed down into the ditch and up to the crest again after Captain Bunker. But he had completely disappeared. A little

lagoon, making in from the bay, on which a small fishing-boat was riding, and a solitary fisherman mending his nets on the muddy shore a few feet from it, were all that was to be seen.

He was turning back, when he saw the object of his search creeping from some reeds, on all fours, with a stealthy, panther-like movement towards the unconscious fisherman. Before Hurlstone could utter a cry, Bunker had sprung upon the unfortunate man, thrown him to the earth, rapidly rolled him over and over, enwrapping him hand and foot in his own net, and involving him hopelessly in its meshes. Tossing the helpless victim — who was apparently too stupefied to call out — to one side, he was rushing towards the boat when, with a single bound, Hurlstone reached his side and laid his hand upon his shoulder.

“Captain Bunker, for God’s sake ! what are you doing ?”

Captain Bunker turned slowly and without apparent concern towards his captor. Hurlstone fell back before the vacant, lack-lustre eyes that were fixed upon him.

“Captain Bunker’s my name,” said the madman, in a whisper. “Lemuel Bunker, of Nantucket ! Hush ! don’t waken him,” pointing to the prostrate fisherman ; “I’ve put him to sleep. I’m Captain Bunker — old drunken Bunker — who stole one ship from her owners, and disgraced himself, and now is going to steal another — ha, ha ! Let me go.”

“Captain Bunker,” said Hurlstone, recovering himself in time to prevent the maniac from dashing into the water. “Look at me. Don’t you know me ?”

“Yes, yes ; you’re one of old Bunker’s dogs kicked overboard by Perkins. I’m one of Perkins’ dogs gone mad, and locked up by Perkins ! Ha, ha ! But I got out ! Hush ! *She* let me out. *She* thought I was going

to see the boys at San Antonio. But I'm going off to see the old barque out there in the fog. I'm going to chuck Perkins overboard and the two mates. Let me go."

He struggled violently. Hurlstone, fearful of quitting his hold to release the fisherman, whom Captain Bunker no longer noticed, and not daring to increase the Captain's fury by openly calling to him, beckoned the pinioned man to make an effort. But, paralyzed by fear, the wretched captive remained immovable, staring at the struggling men. With the strength of desperation Hurlstone at last forced the Captain down upon his knees.

"Listen, Captain! We'll go together—you understand. I'll help you—but we must get a larger boat first—you know."

"But they won't give it," said Captain Bunker mysteriously. "Did n't you hear the Council—the owners—the underwriters say: 'He lost his ship, he's ruined and disgraced, for rum, all for rum!' And we want rum, you know, and it's all over there, in the Excelsior's locker!"

"Yes, yes," said Hurlstone soothingly; "but there's more in the bigger boat. Come with me. We'll let the man loose, and we'll make him show us his bigger boat."

It was an unfortunate suggestion; for the Captain, who had listened with an insane chuckle, and allowed himself to be taken lightly by the hand, again caught sight of the prostrate fisherman. A yell broke from him—his former frenzy returned. With a cry of "Treachery! all hands on deck!" he threw off Hurlstone and rushed into the water.

"Help!" cried the young man, springing after him. "It is madness. He will kill himself!"

The water was shallow, they were both wading, they

both reached the boat at the same time ; but the Captain had scrambled into the stern-sheets, and cast loose the painter, as Hurlstone once more threw his arms about him.

"Hear me, Captain. I'll go with you. Listen ! I know the way through the fog. You understand : I'll pilot you !" He was desperate, but no longer from despair of himself, but of another ; he was reckless, but only to save a madman from the fate that but a moment before he had chosen for himself.

Captain Bunker seemed to soften. "Get in for'ard," he said, in a lower voice. Hurlstone released his grasp, but still clinging to the boat, which had now drifted into deeper water, made his way to the bow. He was climbing over the thwarts when a horrified cry from the fisherman ashore and a jarring laugh in his ear caused him to look up. But not in time to save himself ! The treacherous maniac had suddenly launched a blow from an oar at the unsuspecting man as he was rising to his knees. It missed his head, but fell upon his arm and shoulder, precipitating him violently into the sea.

Stunned by the shock, he sank at first like lead to the bottom. When he rose again, with his returning consciousness, he could see that Captain Bunker had already hoisted sail, and, with the assistance of his oars, was rapidly increasing his distance from the shore. With his returning desperation he turned to strike out after him, but groaned as his one arm sank powerless to his side. A few strokes showed him the madness of the attempt ; a few more convinced him that he himself could barely return to the shore. A sudden torpor had taken possession of him — he was sinking !

With this thought, a struggle for life began ; and this man who had just now sought death so eagerly — with no feeling of inconsistency, with no physical fear of dis-

solution, with only a vague, blind, dogged determination to live for some unknown purpose — a determination as vague and dogged as his former ideas of self-destruction — summoned all his energies to reach the shore. He struck out wildly, desperately ; once or twice he thought he felt his feet touch the bottom, only to find himself powerlessly dragged back towards the sea. With a final superhuman effort he gained at last a foothold on the muddy strand, and, half scrambling, half crawling, sank exhaustedly beside the fisherman's net. But the fisherman was gone ! He attempted again to rise to his feet, but a strange dizziness attacked him. The darkening landscape, with its contracting wall of fog ; the gloomy flat ; the still, pale sea, as yet unruffled by the faint land breeze that was slowly wafting the escaping boat into the shadowy offing — all swam round him ! Through the roaring in his ears he thought he heard drumbeats, and the fanfare of a trumpet, and voices. The next moment he had lost all consciousness.

When he came to, he was lying in the guard-room of the Presidio. Among the group of people who surrounded him he recognized the gaunt features of the Commander, the sympathetic eyes of Father Esteban, and the fisherman who had disappeared. When he rose on his elbow, and attempted to lift himself feebly, the fisherman, with a cry of gratitude, threw himself on his knees, and kissed his helpless hand.

"He lives, he lives ! your Excellencies ! Saints be praised, he lives ! The hero — the brave Americano — the noble caballero who delivered me from the madman."

"Who are you ? and whence come you ?" demanded the Commander of Hurlstone, with grave austerity.

Hurlstone hesitated ; the priest leaned forward with a half anxious, half warning gesture. There was a sudden

rustle in the passage ; the crowd gave way as Miss Keene, followed by Mrs. Markham, entered. The young girl's eyes caught those of the prostrate man. With an impulsive cry she ran towards him.

"Mr. Hurlstone !"

"Hurlstone," echoed the group, pressing nearer the astonished man.

The Comandante lifted his hand gravely with a gesture of silence, and then slowly removed his plumed hat. Every head was instantly uncovered.

"Long live our brave and noble ally, Don Diego ! Long live the beautiful Doña Leonor !"

A faint shade of sadness passed over the priest's face. He glanced from Hurlstone to Miss Keene.

"Then you have consented ?" he whispered.

Hurlstone cast a rapid glance at Eleanor Keene.

"I consent !"

PART II. FREED.

CHAPTER I.

THE MOURNERS AT SAN FRANCISCO.

THE telegraph operator at the Golden Gate of San Francisco had long since given up hope of the *Excelsior*. During the months of September and October, 1854, stimulated by the promised reward, and often by the actual presence of her owners, he had shown zeal and hope in his scrutiny of the incoming ships. The gaunt arms of the semaphore at Fort Point, turned against the sunset sky, had regularly recorded the smallest vessel of the white-winged fleet which sought the portal of the bay during that eventful year of immigration ; but the *Excelsior* was not amongst them. At the close of the year 1854 she was a tradition ; by the end of January, 1855, she was forgotten. Had she been engulfed in her own element she could not have been more completely swallowed up than in the changes of that shore she never reached. Whatever interest or hope was still kept alive in solitary breasts the world never knew. By the significant irony of Fate, even the old-time semaphore that should have signaled her was abandoned and forgotten.

The mention of her name — albeit in a quiet, unconcerned voice — in the dress-circle of a San Francisco theatre, during the performance of a popular female star, was therefore so peculiar that it could only have come from the lips of some one personally interested in the lost vessel. Yet the speaker was a youngish, femi-

nine-looking man of about thirty, notable for his beardlessness, in the crowded circle of bearded and moustachioed Californians, and had been one of the most absorbed of the enthusiastic audience. A weak smile of vacillating satisfaction and uneasiness played on his face during the plaudits of his fellow-admirers, as if he were alternately gratified and annoyed. It might have passed for a discriminating and truthful criticism of the performance, which was a classical burlesque, wherein the star displayed an unconventional frankness of shapely limbs and unrestrained gestures and glances ; but he applauded the more dubious parts equally with the audience. He was evidently familiar with the performance, for a look of eager expectation greeted most of the "business." Either he had not come for the entire evening, or he did not wish to appear as if he had, as he sat on one of the back benches near the passage, and frequently changed his place. He was well, even foppishly, dressed for the period, and appeared to be familiarly known to the loungers in the passage as a man of some social popularity.

He had just been recognized by a man of apparently equal importance and distinction, who had quietly and unconsciously taken a seat by his side, and the recognition appeared equally unexpected and awkward. The new-comer was the older and more decorous-looking, with an added formality of manner and self-assertion that did not, however, conceal a certain habitual shrewdness of eye and lip. He wore a full beard, but the absence of a moustache left the upper half of his handsome and rather satirical mouth uncovered. His dress was less pronounced than his companion's, but of a type of older and more established gentility.

"I was a little late coming from the office to-night," said the younger man, with an embarrassed laugh, "and

I thought I'd drop in here on my way home. Pretty rough outside, ain't it?"

"Yes, it's raining and blowing; so I thought I would n't go up to the plaza for a cab, but wait here for the first one that dropped a fare at the door, and take it on to the hotel."

"Hold on, and I'll go with you," said the young man carelessly. "I say, Brimmer," he added, after a pause, with a sudden assumption of larger gayety, "there's nothing mean about Belle Montgomery, eh? She's a whole team and the little dog under the wagon, ain't she? Deuced pretty woman! — no make-up there, eh?"

"She certainly is a fine woman," said Brimmer gravely, borrowing his companion's lorgnette. "By the way, Markham, do you usually keep an opera-glass in your office in case of an emergency like this?"

"I reckon it was forgotten in my overcoat pocket," said Markham, with an embarrassed smile.

"Left over from the last time," said Brimmer, rising from his seat. "Well, I'm going now — I suppose I'll have to try the plaza."

"Hold on a moment. She's coming on now — there she is!" He stopped, his anxious eyes fixed upon the stage. Brimmer turned at the same moment in no less interested absorption. A quick hush ran through the theatre; the men bent eagerly forward as the Queen of Olympus swept down to the footlights, and, with a ravishing smile, seemed to envelop the whole theatre in a gracious caress.

"You know, 'pon my word, Brimmer, she's a very superior woman," gasped Markham excitedly, when the goddess had temporarily withdrawn. "These fellows here," he said, indicating the audience contemptuously, "don't know her, — think she's all that sort of thing, you know, — and come here just to *look* at her. But she's

very accomplished — in fact, a kind of literary woman. Writes devilish good poetry — only took up the stage on account of domestic trouble: drunken husband that beat her — regular affecting story, you know. These sap-headed fools don't, of course, know *that*. No, sir; she's a remarkable woman! I say, Brimmer, look here! I" — he hesitated, and then went on more boldly, as if he had formed a sudden resolution. "What have you got to do to-night?"

Brimmer, who had been lost in abstraction, started slightly, and said, —

"I — oh! I've got an appointment with Keene. You know he's off by the steamer — day after to-morrow?"

"What! He's not going off on that wild-goose chase, after all? Why, the man's got Excelsior on the brain!" He stopped as he looked at Brimmer's cold face, and suddenly colored. "I mean his plan — his idea's all nonsense — you know that!"

"I certainly don't agree with him," began Brimmer gravely; "but" —

"The idea," interrupted Markham, encouraged by Brimmer's beginning, "of his knocking around the Gulf of California, and getting up an expedition to go inland, just because a mail-steamer saw a barque like the Excelsior off Mazatlan last August. As if the Excelsior would n't have gone into Mazatlan if it had been her! I tell you what it is, Brimmer: it's mighty rough on you and me, and it ain't the square thing at all — after all we've done, and the money we've spent, and the nights we've sat up over the Excelsior — to have this young fellow Keene always putting up the bluff of his lost sister on us! His lost sister, indeed! as if *we* had n't any feelings."

The two men looked at each other, and each felt it incumbent to look down and sigh deeply — not hypocriti-

cally, but perfunctorily, as over a past grief, although anger had been the dominant expression of the speaker.

"I was about to remark," said Brimmer practically, "that the insurance on the Excelsior having been paid, her loss is a matter of commercial record; and that, in a business point of view, this plan of Keene's ain't worth looking at. As a private matter of our own feelings — purely domestic — there's no question but that we must sympathize with him, although he refuses to let us join in the expenses."

"Oh, as to that," said Markham hurriedly, "I told him to draw on me for a thousand dollars last time I saw him. No, sir; it ain't that. What gets me is this darned nagging and simpering around, and opening old sores, and putting on sentimental style, and doing the bereaved business generally. I reckon he'd be even horrified to see you and me here — though it was just a chance with both of us."

"I think not," said Brimmer dryly. "He knows Miss Montgomery already. They're going by the same steamer."

Markham looked up quickly.

"Impossible! She's going by the other line to Panama; that is" — he hesitated — "I heard it from the agent."

"She's changed her mind, so Keene says," returned Brimmer. "She's going by way of Nicaragua. He stops at San Juan to reconnoitre the coast up to Mazatlan. Good-night. It's no use waiting here for a cab any longer, I'm off."

"Hold on!" said Markham, struggling out of a sudden uneasy reflection. "I say, Brimmer," he resumed, with an enforced smile, which he tried to make playful, "your engagement with Keene won't keep you long. What do you say to having a little supper with Miss Montgomery,

eh? — perfectly proper, you know — at our hotel? Just a few friends, eh?”

Brimmer's eyes and lips slightly contracted.

“I believe I am already invited,” he said quietly. “Keene asked me. In fact, that's the appointment. Strange he did n't speak of you,” he added dryly.

“I suppose it's some later arrangement,” Markham replied, with feigned carelessness. “Do you know her?”

“Slightly.”

“You did n't say so!”

“You did n't ask me,” said Brimmer. “She came to consult me about South American affairs. It seems that filibuster General Leonidas, *alias* Perkins, whose little game we stopped by that Peruvian contract, actually landed in Quinquinambo and established a government. It seems she knows him, has a great admiration for him as a Liberator, as she calls him. I think they correspond!”

“She's a wonderful woman, by jingo, Brimmer! I'd like to hear whom she don't know,” said Markham, beaming with a patronizing vanity. “There's you, and there's that filibuster, and old Governor Pico, that she's just snatched bald-headed — I mean, you know, that he recognizes her worth, don't you see? Not like this cattle you see here.”

“Are you coming with me?” said Brimmer, gravely buttoning up his coat, as if encasing himself in a panoply of impervious respectability.

“I'll join you at the hotel,” said Markham hurriedly. “There's a man over there in the parquet that I want to say a word to; don't wait for me.”

With a slight inclination of the head Mr. Brimmer passed out into the lobby, erect, self-possessed, and impeccable. One or two of his commercial colleagues of maturer age, who were loitering leisurely by the wall,

unwilling to compromise themselves by actually sitting down, took heart of grace at this correct apparition. Brimmer nodded to them coolly, as if on 'Change, and made his way out of the theatre. He had scarcely taken a few steps before a furious onset of wind and rain drove him into a doorway for shelter. At the same moment a slouching figure, with a turned-up coat-collar, slipped past him and disappeared in a passage at his right. Partly hidden by his lowered umbrella, Mr. Brimmer himself escaped notice, but he instantly recognized his late companion, Markham. As he resumed his way up the street he glanced into the passage. Halfway down, a light flashed upon the legend "Stage Entrance." Quincy Brimmer, with a faint smile, passed on to his hotel.

It was striking half-past eleven when Mr. Brimmer again issued from his room in the Oriental and passed down a long corridor. Pausing a moment before a side hall that opened from it, he cast a rapid look up and down the corridor, and then knocked hastily at a door. It was opened sharply by a lady's maid, who fell back respectfully before Mr. Brimmer's all-correct presence.

Half reclining on a sofa in the parlor of an elaborate suite of apartments was the woman whom Mr. Brimmer had a few hours before beheld on the stage of the theatre. Lifting her eyes languidly from a book that lay ostentatiously on her lap, she beckoned her visitor to approach. She was a woman still young, whose statuesque beauty had but slightly suffered from cosmetics, late hours, and the habitual indulgence of certain hysterical emotions that were not only inconsistent with the classical suggestions of her figure, but had left traces not unlike the grosser excitement of alcoholic stimulation. She looked like a tinted statue whose slight mutations through stress of time and weather had been unwisely repaired by freshness of color.

"I am such a creature of nerves," she said, raising a superb neck and extending a goddess-like arm, "that I am always perfectly exhausted after the performance. I fly, as you see, to my first love — poetry — as soon as Rosina has changed my dress. It is not generally known — but I don't mind telling *you* — that I often nerve myself for the effort of acting by reading some well-remembered passage from my favorite poets, as I stand by the wings. I quaff, as one might say, a single draught of the Pierian spring before I go on."

The exact relations between the humorous "walk round," in which Miss Montgomery usually made her first entrance, and the volume of Byron she held in her hand, did not trouble Mr. Brimmer so much as the beautiful arm with which she emphasized it. Neither did it strike him that the distinguishing indications of a poetic exaltation were at all unlike the effects of a grosser stimulant known as "Champagne cocktail" on the less sensitive organization of her colleagues. Touched by her melancholy but fascinating smile, he said gallantly that he had observed no sign of exhaustion, or want of power in her performance that evening.

"Then you were there!" she said, fixing her eyes upon him with an expression of mournful gratitude. "You actually left your business and the calls of public duty to see the poor mountebank perform her nightly task."

"I was there with a friend of yours," answered Brimmer soberly, "who actually asked me to the supper to which Mr. Keene had already invited me, and which *you* had been kind enough to suggest to me a week ago."

"True, I had forgotten," said Miss Montgomery, with a large goddess-like indifference that was more effective with the man before her than the most elaborate explanation. "You don't mind them — do you? — for we are

all friends together. My position, you know," she added sadly, "prevents my always following my own inclinations or preferences. Poor Markham, I fear the world does not do justice to his gentle, impressible nature. I sympathize with him deeply; we have both had our afflictions, we have both — lost. Good heavens!" she exclaimed, with a sudden exaggerated start of horror, "what have I done? Forgive my want of tact, dear friend; I had forgotten, wretched being that I am, that *you*, too" —

She caught his hand in both hers, and bowed her head over it as if unable to finish her sentence.

Brimmer, who had been utterly mystified and amazed at this picture of Markham's disconsolate attitude to the world, and particularly to the woman before him, was completely finished by this later tribute to his own affliction. His usually composed features, however, easily took upon themselves a graver cast as he kept, and pressed, the warm hands in his own.

"Fool that I was," continued Miss Montgomery; "in thinking of poor Markham's childlike, open grief, I forgot the deeper sorrow that the more manly heart experiences under an exterior that seems cold and impassible. Yes," she said, raising her languid eyes to Brimmer, "I ought to have felt the throb of that volcano under its mask of snow. You have taught me a lesson."

Withdrawing her hands hastily, as if the volcano had shown some signs of activity, she leaned back on the sofa again.

"You are not yet reconciled to Mr. Keene's expedition, then?" she asked languidly.

"I believe that everything has been already done," said Brimmer, somewhat stiffly; "all sources of sensible inquiry have been exhausted by me. But I envy Keene the eminently practical advantages his impractical jour-

ney gives him," he added, arresting himself, gallantly; "he goes with you."

"Truly!" said Miss Montgomery, with the melancholy abstraction of a stage soliloquy. "Beyond obeying the dictates of his brotherly affection, he gains no real advantage in learning whether his sister is alive or dead. The surety of her death would not make him freer than he is now—freer to absolutely follow the dictates of a new affection; free to make his own life again. It is a sister, not a wife, he seeks."

Mr. Brimmer's forehead slightly contracted. He leaned back a little more rigidly in his chair, and fixed a critical, half supercilious look upon her. She did not seem to notice his almost impertinent scrutiny, but sat silent, with her eyes bent on the carpet, in gloomy abstraction.

"Can you keep a secret?" she said, as if with a sudden resolution.

"Yes," said Brimmer briefly, without changing his look.

"You know I am a married woman. You have heard the story of my wrongs?"

"I have heard them," said Brimmer dryly.

"Well, the husband who abused and deserted me was, I have reason to believe, a passenger on the *Excelsior*."

"M'Corkle!—impossible. There was no such name on the passenger list."

"M'Corkle!" repeated Miss Montgomery, with a dissonant tone in her voice and a slight flash in her eyes. "What are you thinking of? There never was a Mr. M'Corkle; it was one of my *noms de plume*. And where did *you* hear it?"

"I beg your pardon, I must have got it from the press notices of your book of poetry. I knew that Montgomery was only a stage name, and as it was necessary that I

should have another in making the business investments you were good enough to charge me with, I used what I thought was your real name. It can be changed, or you can sign M'Corkle."

"Let it go," said Miss Montgomery, resuming her former manner. "What matters? I wish there was no such thing as business. Well," she resumed, after a pause, "my husband's name is Hurlstone."

"But there was no Hurlstone on the passenger list either," said Brimmer. "I knew them all, and their friends."

"Not in the list from the States; but if he came on board at Callao, you would n't have known it. I knew that he arrived there on the Osprey a few days before the Excelsior sailed."

Mr. Brimmer's eyes changed their expression.

"And you want to find him?"

"No," she said, with an actress's gesture. "I want to know the truth. I want to know if I am still tied to this man, or if I am free to follow the dictates of my own conscience,—to make my life anew,—to become—you see I am not ashamed to say it—to become the honest wife of some honest man."

"A divorce would suit your purpose equally," said Brimmer coldly. "It can be easily obtained."

"A divorce! Do you know what that means to a woman in my profession? It is a badge of shame,—a certificate of disgrace,—an advertisement to every miserable wretch who follows me with his advances that I have no longer the sanctity of girlhood, nor the protection of a wife."

There was tragic emotion in her voice, there were tears in her eyes. Mr. Brimmer, gazing at her with what he firmly thought to be absolute and incisive penetration, did not believe either. But like most practical analysts

of the half-motived sex, he was only half right. The emotion and the tears were as real as anything else in the woman under criticism, notwithstanding that they were not as real as they would have been in the man who criticised. He, however, did her full justice on a point where most men and all women misjudged her: he believed that, through instinct and calculation, she had been materially faithful to her husband; that this large goddess-like physique had all the impeccability of a goddess; that the hysterical dissipation in which she indulged herself was purely mental, and usurped and preoccupied all other emotions. In this public exposition of her beauty there was no sense of shame, for there was no sense of the passion it evoked. And he was right. But there he should have stopped. Unfortunately, his masculine logic forced him to supply a reason for her coldness in the existence of some more absorbing passion. He believed her ambitious and calculating: she was neither. He believed she might have made him an admirable copartner and practical helpmeet: he was wrong.

"You know my secret now," she continued. "You know why I am anxious to know my fate. You understand now why I sympathize with" — she stopped, and made a half contemptuous gesture — "with these men Markham and Keene. *They* do not know it; perhaps they prefer to listen to their own vanity — that's the way of most men; but you do know it, and you have no excuse for misjudging me, or undeceiving them." She stopped and looked at the clock. "They will be here in five minutes; do you wish them to find you already here?"

"It is as *you* wish," stammered Brimmer, completely losing his self-possession.

"I have no wish," she said, with a sublime gesture of

indifference. "If you wait you can entertain them here, while Rosina is dressing me in the next room. We sup in the larger room across the hall."

As she disappeared, Quincy Brimmer rose irresolutely from his seat and checked a half uttered exclamation. Then he turned nervously to the parlor-door. What a senseless idiot he had become! He had never for an instant conceived the idea of making this preliminary confidential visit known to the others; he had no wish to suggest the appearance of an assignation with the woman, who, rightly or wrongly, was notorious; he had nothing to gain by this voluntary assumption of a compromising attitude; yet here he was, he — Mr. Brimmer — with the appearance of being installed in her parlor, receiving her visitors, and dispensing her courtesies. Only a man recklessly in love would be guilty of such an indiscretion — even Markham's feebleness had never reached this absurdity. In the midst of his uneasiness there was a knock at the door; he opened it himself nervously and sharply. Markham's self-satisfied face drew back in alarm and embarrassment at the unexpected apparition. The sight restored Brimmer's coolness and satirical self-possession.

"I — I — did n't know you were here," stammered Markham. "I left Keene in your room."

"Then why did n't you bring him along with you?" said Brimmer maliciously. "Go and fetch him."

"Yes; but he said you were to meet him there," continued Markham, glancing around the empty room with a slight expression of relief.

"My watch was twenty minutes fast, and I had given him up," said Brimmer, with mendacious effrontery. "Miss Montgomery is dressing. You can bring him here before she returns."

Markham flew uneasily down the corridor and quickly returned with a handsome young fellow of five-and-twenty, whose frank face was beaming with excitement and youthful energy. The two elder men could not help regarding him with a mingled feeling of envy and compassion.

"Did you tell Brimmer yet?" said Keene, with animation.

"I have n't had time," hesitated Markham. "The fact is, Brimmer, I think of going with Keene on this expedition."

"Indeed!" said Brimmer superciliously.

"Yes," said Markham, coloring slightly. "You see, we've got news. Tell him, Dick."

"The Storm Cloud got in yesterday from Valparaiso and Central American ports," said Keene, with glowing cheeks. "I boarded her, as usual, last night, for information. The mate says there is a story of a man picked up crazy, in an open fishing-boat, somewhere off the peninsula, and brought into hospital at San Juan last August. He recovered enough lately to tell his story and claim to be Captain Bunker of the Excelsior, whose crew mutinied and ran her ashore in a fog. But the boat in which he was picked up was a Mexican fishing-boat, and there was something revolutionary and political about the story, so that the authorities detained him. The consul has just been informed of the circumstances, and has taken the matter in hand."

"It's a queer story," said Brimmer, gazing from the one to the other, "and I will look into it also to-morrow. If it is true," he added slowly, "I will go with you."

Richard Keene extended his hand impulsively to his two elders.

"You'll excuse me for saying it, Brimmer — and you, too, Markham — but this is just what I've been looking forward to. Not but what I'd have found Nell without

your assistance ; but you see, boys, it *did* look mighty mean in me to make more fuss about a sister than you would for your wives ! But now that it 's all settled " —

" We 'll go to supper," said Miss Montgomery theatrically, appearing at the door. " Dick will give me his arm."

CHAPTER II.

THE MOURNERS AT TODOS SANTOS.

THERE was a breath of spring in the soft morning air of Todos Santos — a breath so subtle and odorous that it penetrated the veil of fog beyond the bay, and for a moment lingered on the deck of a passing steamer like an arresting memory. But only for an instant ; the Ometepe, bound from San Francisco to San Juan del Norte, with its four seekers of the Excelsior, rolled and plunged on its way unconsciously.

Within the bay and over the restful pueblo still dwelt the golden haze of its perpetual summer ; the two towers of the old Mission church seemed to dissolve softly into the mellow upper twilight, and the undulating valleys rolled their green waves up to the wooded heights of San Antonio, that still smiled down upon the arid, pallid desert. But although Nature had not changed in the months that had passed since the advent of the Excelsior, there appeared some strange mutations in the town and its inhabitants. On the beach below the Presidio was the unfinished skeleton of a small sea-going vessel on rude stocks ; on the plaza rose the framed walls and roofless rafters of a wooden building ; near the Embarcadero was the tall adobe chimney of some inchoate manufactory whose walls had half risen from their foundations ; but all of these objects had evidently succumbed to the drowsy influence of the climate, and already had taken the appearances of later and less picturesque ruins of the past. There were singular innovations in the costumes : one or

two umbrellas, used as sunshades, were seen upon the square ; a few small chip hats had taken the place of the stiff sombreros, with an occasional tall white beaver ; while linen coat and nankeen trousers had, at times, usurped the short velvet jacket and loose calzas of the national costume.

At San Antonio the change was still more perceptible. Beside the yawning pit of the abandoned silver mine a straggling building arose, filled with rude machinery, bearing the legend, painted in glowing letters, "Excelsior Silver Mining Co., J. Crosby, Superintendent ;" and in the midst of certain excavations assailing the integrity of the cliff itself was another small building, scarcely larger than a sentry-box, with the inscription, "Office : Eleanor Quicksilver Smelting Works."

Basking in that yellow morning sunlight, with his back against his office, Mr. Brace was seated on the ground, rolling a cigarette. A few feet from him Crosby, extended on his back on the ground, was lazily puffing rings of smoke into the still air. Both of these young gentlemen were dressed in exaggerated Mexican costumes ; the silver buttons fringing the edge of Crosby's calza, open from the knee down to show a glimpse of the snowy under-trouser, were richer and heavier than those usually worn ; while Brace, in addition to the crimson silk sash round his waist, wore a crimson handkerchief around his head, under his sombrero.

"Pepe's falling off in his tobacco," said Brace. "I think I'll have to try some other Fonda."

"How's Banks getting on with his crop?" asked Crosby. "You know he was going to revolutionize the business, and cut out Cuba on that hillside."

"Oh, the usual luck! He couldn't get proper cultivators, and the Injins would n't work regular. I must try and get hold of some of the Comandante's stock ;

but I'm out of favor with the old man since Winslow and I wrecked that fishing-boat on the rocks off yonder. He always believed we were trying to run off, like Captain Bunker. That's why he stopped our shipbuilding, I really believe."

"All the same, we might have had it built and ready now but for our laziness. We might have worked on it nights without their knowing it, and slipped off some morning in the fog."

"And we would n't have got one of the women to go with us! If we are getting shiftless here — and I don't say we're not — these women have just planted themselves and have taken root. But that ain't all: there's the influence of that infernal sneak Hurlstone! He's set the Comandante against us, you know; he, and the priest, the Comandante, and Nelly Keene make up the real Council of Todos Santos. Between them they've shoved out the poor little Alcalde, who's ready to give up everything to dance attendance on Mrs. Brimmer. They run the whole concern, and they give out that it's owing to them that we're given parole of the town, and the privilege of spending our money and working these mines. Who'd have thought that sneak Hurlstone would have played his cards so well? It makes me regularly sick to hear him called 'Don Diego.'"

"Yet you're mightily tickled when that black-eyed sister of the Alcalde calls you 'Don Carlos,'" said Crosby, yawning.

"Doña Isabel," said Brace, with some empressement, "is a lady of position, and these are only her national courtesies."

"She just worships Miss Keene, and I reckon she knows by this time all about your old attentions to her friend," said Crosby, with lazy mischief.

"My attentions to Miss Keene were simply those of

an ordinary acquaintance, and were never as strongly marked as yours to Mrs. Brimmer."

"Who has deserted *me* as Miss Keene did *you*," rejoined Crosby.

Brace's quick color had risen again, and he would have made some sharp retort, but the jingling of spurs caught his ear. They both turned quickly, and saw Banks approaching. He was dressed as a vaquero, but with his companions' like exaggeration of detail; yet, while his spurs were enormous, and his sombrero unusually expansive, he still clung to his high shirt-collars and accurately tied check cravat.

"Well?" he said, approaching them.

"Well?" said Crosby.

"Well?" repeated Brace.

After this national salutation, the three Americans regarded each other silently.

"Knocked off cultivating to-day?" queried Crosby, lighting a fresh cigarette.

"The peons have," said Banks; "it's another saint's day. That's the fourth in two weeks. Leaves about two clear working days in each week, counting for the days off, when they're getting over the effects of the others. I tell you what, sir, the Catholic religion is not suited to a working civilization, or else the calendar ought to be overhauled and a lot of these saints put on the retired list. It's hard enough to have all the Apostles on your pay-roll, so to speak, but to have a lot of fellows run in on you as saints, and some of them not even men or women, but *ideas*, is piling up the agony! I don't wonder they call the place 'All Saints.' The only thing to do," continued Banks severely, "is to open communication with the desert, and run in some of the heathen tribes outside. I've made a proposition to the Council offering to take five hundred of them in the raw, unre-

generate state, and turn 'em over after a year to the Church. If I could get Hurlstone to do some log-rolling with that Padre, his friend, I might get the bill through. But I'm always put off till to-morrow. Everything here is 'Hasta mañana; hasta mañana,' always. I believe when the last trump is sounded, they'll say, 'Hasta mañana.' What are *you* doing?" he said, after a pause.

"Waiting for your ship," answered Crosby sarcastically.

"Well, you can laugh, gentlemen — but you won't have to wait long. According to my calculations that Mexican ship is about due now. And I ain't basing my figures on anything the Mexican Government is going to do, or any commercial speculation. I'm reckoning on the Catholic Church."

The two men languidly looked towards him. Banks continued gravely, —

"I made the proper inquiries, and I find that the stock of rosaries, scapularies, blessed candles, and other ecclesiastical goods, is running low. I find that just at the nick of time a fresh supply always comes from the Bishop of Guadalajara, with instructions from the Church. Now, gentlemen, my opinion is that the Church, and the Church only, knows the secret of the passage through the foggy channel, and keeps it to itself. I look at this commercially, as a question of demand and supply. Well, sir, the only real trader here at Todos Santos is the Church."

"Then you don't take in account the interests of Brimmer, Markham, and Keene," said Brace. "Do you suppose they're doing nothing?"

"I don't say they're not; but you're confounding interests with *instincts*. They have n't got the instinct to find this place, and all that they've done and are doing is blind calculation. Just look at the facts. As the filibuster who captured the *Excelsior* of course changed

her name, her rig-out, and her flag, and even got up a false register for her, she's as good as lost, as far as the world knows, until she lands at Quinquinambo. Then supposing she's found out, and the whole story is known — although everything's against such a proposition — the news has got to go back to San Francisco before the real search will be begun. As to any clue that might come from Captain Bunker, that's still more remote. Allowing he crossed the bar and got out of the channel, he was n't at the right time for meeting a passing steamer; and the only coasters are Mexican. If he didn't die of delirium tremens or exposure, and was really picked up in his senses by some other means, he would have been back with succor before this, if only to get our evidence to prove the loss of the vessel. No, sir; sooner or later, of course, the San Francisco crowd are bound to find us here. And if it was n't for my crops and our mine, I would n't be in a hurry for them; but our *first* hold is the Church."

He stopped. Crosby was asleep. Brace arose lazily, lounged into his office, and closed his desk.

"Going to shut for the day?" said Banks, yawning.

"I reckon," said Brace dubiously; "I don't know but I'd take a little *pasear* into the town if I had my horse ready."

"Take mine, and I'll trapse over on foot to the Ranche with Crosby — after a spell. You'll find him under that big madroño, if he has not already wound himself up with his lariat by walking round it. Those Mexican horses can't go straight even when they graze — they must feed in a circle. He's a little fresh, so look out for him!"

"All the better. I'd like to get into town just after the siesta."

"Siesta!" echoed Banks, lying comfortably down in the shade just vacated by Brace; "that's another of their

shiftless practices. Two hours out of every day — that's a day out of the week — spent in a hammock ; and during business hours too ! It's disgraceful, sir, simply disgraceful."

He turned over and closed his eyes, as if to reflect on its enormity.

Brace had no difficulty in finding the mare, although some trouble in mounting her. But, like his companions, having quickly adopted the habits of the country, he had become a skillful and experienced horseman, and the mustang, after a few springless jumps, which failed to unseat him, submitted to his rider. The young man galloped rapidly towards Todos Santos ; but when within a few miles of the pueblo he slackened his pace. From the smiles and greetings of wayfarers — among whom were some pretty Indian girls and mestizas — it was evident that the handsome young foreigner, who had paid them the compliment of extravagantly adopting their national costume, was neither an unfamiliar nor an unpleasing spectacle. When he reached the posada at the top of the hilly street, he even carried his simulation of the local customs to the point of charging the veranda at full speed, and pulling up suddenly at the threshold, after the usual fashion of vaqueros. The impetuous apparition brought a short stout man to the door, who, welcoming him with effusive politeness, conducted him to an inner room that gave upon a green grass courtyard. Seated before a rude table, sipping aguardiente, was his countryman Winslow and two traders of the pueblo. They were evidently of the number already indicated who had adopted the American fashions. Señor Ruiz wore a linen "duster" in place of his embroidered jacket, and Señor Martinez had an American beard, or "goatee," in imitation of Mr. Banks. The air was yellow with the fumes of tobacco, through which the shrewd eyes of Winslow gleamed murkily.

"This," he said to his countryman, in fluent if not elegant Spanish, indicating the gentleman who had imitated Banks, "is a man of ideas, and a power in Todos Santos. He would control all the votes in his district if there were anything like popular suffrage here, and he understands the American policy."

Señor Martinez here hastened to inform Mr. Brace that he had long cherished a secret and enthusiastic admiration for that grand and magnanimous nation of which his friend was such a noble representative; that, indeed, he might say it was an inherited taste, for had not his grandfather once talked with the American whaling Capitan Coffino and partaken of a subtle spirit known as "er-rum" on his ship at Acapulco?

"There's nothing mean about Martinez," said Winslow to Brace confidentially, in English. "He's up to anything, and ready from the word 'Go.' Don't you think he's a little like Banks, you know—a sort of Mexican edition. And there is Ruiz, he's a cattle dealer; he'd be a good friend of Banks if Banks was n't so infernally self-opinionated. But Ruiz ain't a fool, either. He's picked up a little English—good American, I mean—from me already."

Señor Ruiz here smiled affably, to show his comprehension; and added slowly, with great gravity, —

"It is of twenty-four year I have first time the Americano of your beautiful country known. He have buy the hides and horns of the cattle — for his ship — here."

"Here?" echoed Brace. "I thought no American ship — no ship at all — had been in here for fifty years."

Ruiz shrugged his shoulders, and cast a glance at his friend Martinez, lowered his voice and lifted his eyelashes at the same moment, and, jerking his yellow, tobacco-stained thumb over his arm, said, —

"Ah — of a verity — on the beach — two leagues away."

"Do you hear that?" said Winslow, turning complacently to Brace and rising to his feet. "Don't you see now what hogwash the Commander, Alcalde, and the priest have been cramming down our throats about this place being sealed up for fifty years. What he says is all Gospel truth. That's what I wanted you fellows to hear, and you might have heard before, only you were afraid of compromising yourselves by talking with the people. You get it into your heads — and the Comandante helped you to get it there — that Todos Santos was a sort of Sleepy Hollow, and that no one knew anything of the political changes for the last fifty years. Well, what's the fact? Ask Ruiz there, and Martinez, and they'll both tell you they know that Mexico got her independence in 1826, and that the Council keep it dark that they may perpetuate themselves. They know," he continued, lowering his voice, "that the Commander's commission from the old Viceroy is n't worth the paper it is stamped upon."

"But what about the Church?" asked Brace hesitatingly, remembering Banks' theory.

"The Church — carambà! the priests were ever with the Escossas, the aristocrats, and against the Yorkenos, the men of the Republic — the people," interrupted Martinez vehemently; "they will not accept, they will not proclaim the Republic to the people. They shut their eyes, so —. They fold their hands, so —. They say, 'Sicut era principio et nunc et semper in secula seculorum!' Look you, Señor, I am not of the Church — no, carambà! I snap my fingers at the priests. Ah! what they give one is food for the bull's horns, believe me — I have read 'Tompano,' the American 'Tompano.'"

"Who's he?" asked Brace.

"He means Tom Paine! 'The Age of Reason' — you know," said Winslow, gazing with a mixture of de-

light and patronizing pride at the Radicals of Todos Santos. "Oh! he's no fool — is Martinez, nor Ruiz either! And while you've been flirting with Doña Isabel, and Banks has been trying to log-roll the Padre, and Crosby going in for siestas, I've found them out. And there are a few more — are n't there, Ruiz?"

Ruiz darted a mysterious glance at Brace, and apparently not trusting himself to speak, checked off his ten fingers dramatically in the air thrice.

"As many of a surety! God and liberty!"

"But, if this is so, why have n't they *done* something?"

Señor Martinez glanced at Señor Ruiz.

"Hasta mañana!" he said slowly.

"Oh, this is a case of 'Hasta mañana!'" said Brace, somewhat relieved.

"They can wait," returned Winslow hurriedly. "It's too big a thing to rush into without looking round. You know what it means? Either Todos Santos is in rebellion against the present Government of Mexico, or she is independent of any. Her present Government, in any event, don't represent either the Republic of Mexico or the people of Todos Santos — don't you see? And in that case *we* 've got as good a right here as any one."

"He speaks the truth," said Ruiz, grasping a hand of Brace and Winslow each; "in this we are — as brothers."

"God and liberty!" ejaculated Martinez, in turn seizing the other disengaged hands of the Americans, and completing the mystic circle.

"God and liberty!" echoed a thin chorus from their host and a few loungers who had entered unperceived.

Brace felt uneasy. He was not wanting in the courage or daring of youth, but it struck him that his attitude was by no means consistent with his attentions to Doña Isabel. He managed to get Winslow aside.

"This is all very well as a 'free lunch' conspiracy; but you're forgetting your parole," he said, in a low voice.

"We gave our parole to the present Government. When it no longer exists, there will be no parole — don't you see?"

"Then these fellows prefer waiting" —

"Until we can get *outside* help, you understand. The first American ship that comes in here — eh?"

Brace felt relieved. After all, his position in regard to the Alcalde's sister would not be compromised; he might even be able to extend some protection over her; and it would be a magnanimous revenge if he could even offer it to Miss Keene.

"I see you don't swear anybody to secrecy," he said, with a laugh; "shall I speak to Crosby, or will you?"

"Not yet; he'll only see something to laugh at. And Banks and Martinez would quarrel at once, and go back on each other. No; my idea is to let some outsider do for Todos Santos what Perkins did for Quinquambo. Do you take?"

His long, thin, dyspeptic face lit up with a certain small political cunning and shrewdness that struck Brace with a half-respect.

"I say, Winslow; you'd have made a first-class caucus leader in San Francisco."

Winslow smiled complacently. "There's something better to play on here than ward politics," he replied. "There's a material here that—like the mine and the soil—ain't half developed. I reckon I can show Banks something that beats lobbying and log-rolling for contracts. I've let you into this thing to show you a sample of my prospecting. Keep it to yourself if you want it to pay. Dat's me, George! Good-by! I'll be out to the office to-morrow!"

He turned back towards his brother politicians with an

expression of satisfied conceit that Brace for a moment envied. The latter even lingered on the veranda, as if he would have asked Winslow another question; but, looking at his watch, he suddenly recollected himself, and, mounting his horse, cantered down towards the plaza.

The hour of siesta was not yet over, and the streets were still deserted — probably the reason why the politicians of Todos Santos had chosen that hour for their half secret meeting. At the corner of the plaza he dismounted and led his horse to the public hitching-post — gnawn and nibbled by the teeth of generations of mustangs — and turned into the narrow lane flanked by the walls of the Alcalde's garden. Halfway down he stopped before a slight breach in the upper part of the adobe barrier, and looked cautiously around. The long, shadowed vista of the lane was unobstructed by any moving figure as far as the yellow light of the empty square beyond. With a quick leap he gained the top of the wall and disappeared on the other side.

CHAPTER III.

INTERNATIONAL COURTESIES.

THE garden over whose wall Brace had mysteriously vanished was apparently as deserted as the lane and plaza without. But its solitude was one of graceful shadow and restful loveliness. A tropical luxuriance, that had perpetuated itself year after year, until it was half suffocated in its own overgrowth and strangled with its own beauty, spread over a variegated expanse of starry flowers, shimmering leaves, and slender inextricable branches, pierced here and there by towering rigid cactus spikes or the curved plumes of palms. The repose of ages lay in its hushed groves, its drooping vines, its lifeless creepers ; the dry dust of its decaying leaves and branches mingled with the living perfumes like the spiced embalmings of a forgotten past.

Nevertheless, this tranquillity, after a few moments, was singularly disturbed. There was no breeze stirring, and yet the long fronds of a large fan palm, that stood near the breach in the wall, began to move gently from right to left, like the arms of some graceful semaphore, and then as suddenly stopped. Almost at the same moment a white curtain, listlessly hanging from a canopied balcony of the Alcalde's house, began to exhibit a like rhythmical and regular agitation. Then everything was motionless again ; an interval of perfect peace settled upon the garden. It was broken by the apparition of Brace under the balcony, and the black-veiled and flowered head of Doña Isabel from the curtain above.

"Crazy boy!"

"Señorita!"

"Hush! I am coming down!"

"You? But Doña Ursula!"

"There is no more Doña Ursula!"

"Well — your duenna, whoever she is!"

"There is no duenna!"

"What?"

"Hush up your tongue, idiot boy!" (this in English.)

The little black head and the rose on top of it disappeared. Brace drew himself up against the wall and waited. The time seemed interminable. Impatiently looking up and down, he at last saw Doña Isabel at a distance, quietly and unconcernedly moving among the roses, and occasionally stooping as if to pick them. In an instant he was at her side.

"Let me help you," he said.

She opened her little brownish palm, —

"Look!" In her hand were a few leaves of some herb. "It is for you."

Brace seized and kissed the hand.

"Is it some love-test?"

"It is for what you call a julep-cocktail," she replied gravely. "He will remain in a glass with aguardiente; you shall drink him with a straw. My sister has said that ever where the Americans go they expect him to arrive."

"I prefer to take him straight," said Brace, laughing, as he nibbled a limp leaf bruised by the hand of the young girl. "He's pleasanter, and, on the whole, more wildly intoxicating this way! But what about your duenna? and how comes this blessed privilege of seeing you alone?"

Doña Isabel lifted her black eyes suddenly to Brace.

"You do not comprehend, then? Is it not, then, the

custom of the Americans? Is it not, then, that there is no duenna in your country?"

"There are certainly no duennas in my country. But who has changed the custom here?"

"Is it not true that in your country any married woman shall duenna the young señorita?" continued Doña Isabel, without replying; "that any caballero and señorita shall see each other in the patio, and not under a balcony?—that they may speak with the lips, and not the fan?"

"Well—yes," said Brace.

"Then my brother has arranged it as so. He have much hear the Doña Barbara Brimmer when she make talk of these things frequently, and he is informed and impressed much. He will truly have that you will come of the corridor, and not the garden, for me, and that I shall have no duenna but the Doña Barbara. This does not make you happy, you American idiot boy!"

It did not. The thought of carrying on a flirtation under the fastidious Boston eye of Mrs. Brimmer, instead of under the discreet and mercenarily averted orbs of Doña Ursula, did not commend itself pleasantly to Brace.

"Oh, yes," he returned quickly. "We will go into the corridor, in the fashion of my country"—

"Yes," said Doña Isabel dubiously.

"*After* we have walked in the garden in the fashion of *yours*. That's only fair, is n't it?"

"Yes," said Doña Isabel gravely; "that's what the Comandante will call 'internation-al courtesy.'"

The young man slipped his arm around the young diplomatist's waist, and they walked on in decorous silence under the orange-trees.

"It seems to me," said Brace presently, "that Mrs. Brimmer has a good deal to say up your way?"

"Ah, yes; but what will you? It is my brother who has love for her."

"But," said Brace, stopping suddenly, "does n't he know that she has a husband living?"

Doña Isabel lifted her lashes in childlike wonder.

"Always! you idiot American boy. That is why. Ah, Mother of God! my brother is discreet. He is not a maniac, like you, to come after a silly muchacha like me."

The response which Brace saw fit to make to this statement elicited a sharp tap upon the knuckles from Doña Isabel.

"Tell to me," she said suddenly, "is not that a custom of your country?"

"What? *That?*"

"No, insensate. To attend a married señora?"

"Not openly."

"Ah, that is wrong," said Doña Isabel meditatively, moving the point of her tiny slipper on the gravel. "Then it is the young girl that shall come in the corridor and the married lady on the balcony?"

"Well, yes."

"Good-by, ape!"

She ran swiftly down the avenue of palms to a small door at the back of the house, turned, blew a kiss over the edge of her fan to Brace, and disappeared. He hesitated a moment or two, then quickly rescaling the wall, dropped into the lane outside, followed it to the gateway of the casa, and entered the patio as Doña Isabel decorously advanced from a darkened passage to the corridor. Although the hour of siesta had passed, her sister, Miss Chubb, the Alcalde, and Mrs. Brimmer were still lounging here on sofas and hammocks.

It would have been difficult for a stranger at a first glance to discover the nationality of the ladies. Mrs. Brimmer and her friend Miss Chubb had entirely succumbed to the extreme dishabille of the Spanish toilet — not without a certain languid grace on the part of Mrs.

Brimmer, whose easy contour lent itself to the stayless bodice ; or a certain bashful, youthful naïveté on the part of Miss Chubb, the rounded dazzling whiteness of whose neck and shoulders half pleased and half frightened her in her low, white, plain camisa — under the lace mantilla.

"It is *such* a pleasure to see you again, Mr. Brace," said Mrs. Brimmer, languidly observing the young man through the sticks of her fan ; "I was telling Don Ramon that I feared Doña Ursula had frightened you away. I told him that your experience of American society might have caused you to misinterpret the habitual reserve of the Castilian," she continued with the air of being already an alien of her own country, "and I should be only too happy to undertake the chaperoning of both these young ladies in their social relations with our friends. And how is dear Mr. Banks ? and Mr. Crosby ? whom I so seldom see now. I suppose, however, business has its superior attractions."

But Don Ramon, with impulsive gallantry, would not — nay, *could* not — for a moment tolerate a heresy so alarming. It was simply wildly impossible. For why ? In the presence of Doña Barbara — it exists not in the heart of man !

"*You* cannot, of course, conceive it, Don Ramon," said Mrs. Brimmer, with an air of gentle suffering ; "but I fear it is sadly true of the American gentlemen. They become too absorbed in their business. They forget their duty to our sex in their selfish devotion to affairs in which we are debarred from joining them, and yet they wonder that we prefer the society of men who are removed by birth, tradition, and position from this degrading kind of selfishness."

"But that was scarcely true of your own husband. *He* was not only a successful man in business, but we can see that he was equally successful in his relations to at

least one of the fastidious sex," said Brace, maliciously glancing at Don Ramon.

Mrs. Brimmer received the innuendo with invulnerable simplicity.

"Mr. Brimmer is, I am happy to say, *not* a business man. He entered into certain contracts having more or less of a political complexion, and carrying with them the genius but not the material results of trade. That he is not a business man—and a successful one—my position here at the present time is a sufficient proof," she said triumphantly. "And I must also protest," she added, with a faint sigh, "against Mr. Brimmer being spoken of in the past tense by anybody. It is painfully premature and ominous!"

She drew her mantilla across her shoulders with an expression of shocked sensitiveness which completed the humiliation of Brace and the subjugation of Don Ramon. But, unlike most of her sex, she was wise in the moment of victory. She cast a glance over her fan at Brace, and turned languidly to Doña Isabel.

"Mr. Brace must surely want some refreshment after his long ride. Why don't you seize this opportunity to show him the garden and let him select for himself the herbs he requires for that dreadful American drink; Miss Chubb and your sister will remain with me to receive the Comandante's secretary and the Doctor when they come."

"She's more than my match," whispered Brace to Doña Isabel, as they left the corridor together. "I give in. I don't understand her: she frightens me."

"That is of your conscience! It is that you would understand the Doña Leonor—your dear Miss Keene—better! Ah! silence, imbecile! this Doña Barbara is even as thou art—a talking parrot. She will have that the Comandante's secretary, Manuel, shall marry Mees

Chubb, and that the Doctor shall marry my sister. But she knows not that Manuel — listen so that you shall get sick at your heart and swallow your moustachio! — that Manuel loves the beautiful Leonor, and that Leonor loves not him, but Don Diego; and that my sister loathes the little Doctor. And this Doña Barbara, that makes your liver white, would be a feeder of chickens with such barley as this! Ah! come along!”

The arrival of the Doctor and the Comandante's secretary created another diversion, and the pairing off of the two couples indicated by Doña Isabel for a stroll in the garden, which was now beginning to recover from the still heat of mid-day. This left Don Ramon and Mrs. Brimmer alone in the corridor; Mrs. Brimmer's indefinite languor, generally accepted as some vague aristocratic condition of mind and body, not permitting her to join them.

There was a moment of dangerous silence; the voices of the young people were growing fainter in the distance. Mrs. Brimmer's eyes, in the shadow of her fan, were becoming faintly phosphorescent. Don Ramon's melancholy face, which had grown graver in the last few moments, approached nearer to her own.

“You are unhappy, Doña Barbara. The coming of this young cavalier, your countryman, revives your anxiety for your home. You are thinking of this husband who comes not. Is it not so?”

“I am thinking,” said Mrs. Brimmer, with a sudden revulsion of solid Boston middle-class propriety, shown as much in the dry New England asperity of voice that stung even through her drawling of the Castilian speech, as in anything she said, — “I am thinking that, unless Mr. Brimmer comes soon, I and Miss Chubb shall have to abandon the hospitality of your house, Don Ramon. Without looking upon myself as a widow, or as indefi-

nately separated from Mr. Brimmer, the few words let fall by Mr. Brace show me what might be the feelings of my countrymen on the subject. However charming and considerate your hospitality has been — and I do not deny that it has been *most* grateful to *me* — I feel I cannot continue to accept it in those equivocal circumstances. I am speaking to a gentleman who, with the instincts and chivalrous obligations of his order, must sympathize with my own delicacy in coming to this conclusion, and who will not take advantage of my confession that I do it with pain.”

She spoke with a dry alacrity and precision so unlike her usual languor and the suggestions of the costume, and even the fan she still kept shading her faintly glowing eyes, that the man before her was more troubled by her manner than her words, which he had but imperfectly understood.

“You will leave here — this house?” he stammered.

“It is necessary,” she returned.

“But you shall listen to me first!” he said hurriedly.

“Hear me, Doña Barbara — I have a secret — I will to you confess” —

“You must confess nothing,” said Mrs. Brimmer, dropping her feet from the hammock, and sitting up primly, “I mean — nothing I may not hear.”

The Alcalde cast a look upon her at once blank and imploring.

“Ah, but you will hear,” he said, after a pause. “There is a ship coming here. In two weeks she will arrive. None know it but myself, the Comandante, and the Padre. It is a secret of the Government. She will come at night; she will depart in the morning, and no one else shall know. It has ever been that she brings no one to Todos Santos, that she takes no one from Todos Santos. That is the law. But I swear to you that she shall take

you, your children, and your friend to Acapulco in secret, where you will be free. You will join your husband; you will be happy. I will remain, and I will die."

It would have been impossible for any woman but Mrs. Brimmer to have regarded the childlike earnestness and melancholy simplicity of this grown-up man without a pang. Even this superior woman experienced a sensible awkwardness as she slipped from the hammock and regained an upright position.

"Of course," she began, "your offer is exceedingly generous; and although I should not, perhaps, take a step of this kind without the sanction of Mr. Brimmer, and am not sure that he would not regard it as rash and premature, I will talk it over with Miss Chubb, for whom I am partially responsible. Nothing," she continued, with a sudden access of feeling, "would induce me, for any selfish consideration, to take any step that would imperil the future of that child, towards whom I feel as a sister." A slight suffusion glistened under her pretty brown lashes. "If anything should happen to her, I would never forgive myself; if I should be the unfortunate means of severing any ties that *she* may have formed, I could never look her in the face again. Of course, I can well understand that our presence here must be onerous to you, and that you naturally look forward to any sacrifice — even that of the interests of your country, and the defiance of its laws — to relieve you from a position so embarrassing as yours has become. I only trust, however, that the ill effects you allude to as likely to occur to yourself after our departure may be exaggerated by your sensitive nature. It would be an obligation added to the many that we owe you, which Mr. Brimmer would naturally find he could not return — and that, I can safely say, he would not hear of for a single moment."

While speaking, she had unconsciously laid aside her

fan, lifted her mantilla from her head with both hands, and, drawing it around her shoulders and under her lifted chin, had crossed it over her bosom with a certain prim, automatic gesture, as if it had been the starched kerchief of some remote Puritan ancestress. With her arms still unconsciously crossed, she stooped rigidly, picked up her fan with three fingers, as if it had been a prayer-book, and, with a slight inclination of her bared head, with its accurately parted brown hair, passed slowly out of the corridor.

Astounded, bewildered, yet conscious of some vague wound, Don Ramon remained motionless, staring after her straight, retreating figure. Unable to follow closely either the meaning of her words or the logic of her reasoning, he nevertheless comprehended the sudden change in her manner, her voice, and the frigid resurrection of a nature he had neither known nor suspected. He looked blankly at the collapsed hammock, as if he expected to find in its depths those sinuous graces, languid fascinations, and the soft, half sensuous contour cast off by this vanishing figure of propriety.

In the eight months of their enforced intimacy and platonic seclusion he had learned to love this naïve, insinuating woman, whose frank simplicity seemed equal to his own, without thought of reserve, secrecy, or deceit. He had gradually been led to think of the absent husband with what he believed to be her own feelings — as of some impalpable, fleshless ancestor from whose remote presence she derived power, wealth, and importance, but to whom she owed only respect and certain obligations of honor equal to his own. He had never heard her speak of her husband with love, with sympathy, with fellowship, with regret. She had barely spokep of him at all, and then rather as an attractive factor in her own fascinations than a bar to a free indulgence in them.

He was as little in her way as — his children. With what grace she had adapted herself to his — Don Ramon's — life — she who frankly confessed she had no sympathy with her husband's! With what languid enthusiasm she had taken up the customs of *his* country, while deploring the habits of her own! With what goddess-like indifference she had borne this interval of waiting! And yet this woman — who had seemed the embodiment of romance — had received the announcement of his sacrifice — the only revelation he allowed himself to make of his hopeless passion — with the frigidity of a duenna! Had he wounded her in some other unknown way? Was she mortified that he had not first declared his passion — he who had never dared to speak to her of love before? Perhaps she even doubted it! In his ignorance of the world he had, perhaps, committed some grave offense! He should not have let her go! He should have questioned, implored her — thrown himself at her feet! Was it too late yet?

He passed hurriedly into the formal little drawing-room, whose bizarre coloring was still darkened by the closed blinds and dropped awnings that had shut out the heat of day. She was not there. He passed the open door of her room; it was empty. At the end of the passage a faint light stole from a door opening into the garden that was still ajar. She must have passed out that way. He opened it, and stepped out into the garden.

The sound of voices beside a ruined fountain a hundred yards away indicated the vicinity of the party; but a single glance showed him that she was not among them. So much the better — he would find her alone. Cautiously slipping beside the wall of the house, under the shadow of a creeper, he gained the long avenue without attracting attention. She was not there. Had she effectively evaded contact with the others by leaving the

garden through the little gate in the wall that entered the Mission enclosure? It was partly open, as if some one had just passed through. He followed, took a few steps, and stopped abruptly. In the shadow of one of the old pear-trees a man and woman were standing. An impulse of wild jealousy seized him; he was about to leap forward, but the next moment the measured voice of the Comandante, addressing Mrs. Markham, fell upon his ear. He drew back with a sudden flush upon his face. The Comandante of Todos Santos, in grave, earnest accents, was actually offering to Mrs. Markham the same proposal that he, Don Ramon, had made to Mrs. Brimmer but a moment ago!

"No one," said the Comandante sententiously, "will know it but myself. You will leave the ship at Acapulco; you will rejoin your husband in good time; you will be happy, my child; you will forget the old man who drags out the few years of loneliness still left to him in Todos Santos."

Forgetting himself, Don Ramon leaned breathlessly forward to hear Mrs. Markham's reply. Would she answer the Comandante as Doña Barbara had answered *him*? Her words rose distinctly in the evening air.

"You're a gentleman, Don Miguel Briones; and the least respect I can show a man of your kind is not to pretend that I don't understand the sacrifice you're making. I shall always remember it as about the biggest compliment I ever received, and the biggest risk that any man — except one — ever ran for me. But as the man who ran that bigger risk is n't here to speak for himself, and generally trusts his wife, Susan Markham, to speak for him — it's all the same as if *he* thanked you. There's my hand, Don Miguel: shake it. Well — if you prefer it — kiss it then. There — don't be a fool — but let's go back to Miss Keene."

CHAPTER IV.

A GLEAM OF SUNSHINE.

WHILE these various passions had been kindled by her compatriots in the peaceful ashes of Todos Santos, Eleanor Keene had moved among them indifferently and, at times, unconsciously. The stranding of her young life on that unknown shore had not drawn her towards her fellow-exiles, and the circumstances which afterwards separated her from daily contact with them completed the social estrangement. She found herself more in sympathy with the natives, to whom she had shown no familiarity, than with her own people, who had mixed with them more or less contemptuously. She found the naïveté of Doña Isabel more amusing than the doubtful simplicity of that married ingénue Mrs. Brimmer, although she still met the young girl's advances with a certain reserve. She found herself often pained by the practical brusqueness with which Mrs. Markham put aside the Comandante's delicate attentions, and she was moved with a strange pity for his childlike trustfulness, which she knew was hopeless. As the months passed, on the few occasions that she still met the Excelsior's passengers she was surprised to find how they had faded from her memory, and to discover in them the existence of qualities that made her wonder how she could have ever been familiar with them. She reproached herself with this fickleness; she wondered if she would have felt thus if they had completed their voyage to San Francisco together; and she recalled, with a sad smile, the enthu-

siastic plans they had formed during the passage to perpetuate their fellowship by anniversaries and festivals. But she, at last, succumbed, and finally accepted their open alienation as preferable to the growing awkwardness of their chance encounters.

For a few weeks following the flight of Captain Bunker and her acceptance of the hospitality and protection of the Council, she became despondent. The courage that had sustained her, and the energy she had shown in the first days of their abandonment, suddenly gave way, for no apparent reason. She bitterly regretted the brother whom she scarcely remembered; she imagined his suspense and anguish on her account, and suffered for both; she felt the dumb pain of homesickness for a home she had never known. Her loneliness became intolerable. Her condition at last affected Mrs. Markham, whose own idleness had been beguiled by writing to her husband an exhaustive account of her captivity, which had finally swelled to a volume on Todos Santos, its resources, inhabitants, and customs. "Good heavens!" she said, "you must do something, child, to occupy your mind — if it is only a flirtation with that conceited Secretary." But this terrible alternative was happily not required. The Comandante had still retained as part of the old patriarchal government of the Mission the Presidio school, for the primary instruction of the children of the soldiers, — dependants of the garrison. Miss Keene, fascinated by several little pairs of beady black eyes that had looked up trustingly to hers from the playground on the glacis, offered to teach English to the Comandante's flock. The offer was submitted to the spiritual head of Todos Santos, and full permission given by Padre Esteban to the fair heretic. Singing was added to the instruction, and in a few months the fame of the gracious Doña Leonor's pupils stirred to emulation even the boy choristers of the Mission.

Her relations with James Hurlstone during this interval were at first marked by a strange and unreasoning reserve. Whether she resented the singular coalition forced upon them by the Council and felt the awkwardness of their unintentional imposture when they met, she did not know, but she generally avoided his society. This was not difficult, as he himself had shown no desire to intrude his confidences upon her; and even in her shyness she could not help thinking that if he had treated the situation lightly or humorously — as she felt sure Mr. Brace or Mr. Crosby would have done — it would have been less awkward and unpleasant. But his gloomy reserve seemed to the high-spirited girl to color their innocent partnership with the darkness of conspiracy.

"If your conscience troubles you, Mr. Hurlstone, in regard to the wretched infatuation of those people," she had once said, "undeceive them, if you can, and I will assist you. And don't let that affair of Captain Bunker worry you either. I have already confessed to the Commandante that he escaped through my carelessness."

"You could not have done otherwise without sacrificing the poor Secretary, who must have helped you," Hurlstone returned quietly.

Miss Keene bit her lip and dropped the subject. At their next meeting Hurlstone himself resumed it.

"I hope you don't allow that absurd decree of the Council to disturb you; I imagine they're quite convinced of their folly. I know that the Padre is; and I know that he thinks you've earned a right to the gratitude of the Council in your gracious task at the Presidio school that is far beyond any fancied political service."

"I really have n't thought about it at all," said Miss Keene coolly. "I thought it was *you* who were annoyed."

"I? not at all," returned Hurlstone quickly. "I have

been able to assist the Padre in arranging the ecclesiastical archives of the church, and in suggesting some improvement in codifying the ordinances of the last forty years. No; I believe I'm earning my living here, and I fancy they think so."

"Then it is n't *that* that troubles you?" said Miss Keene carelessly, but glancing at him under the shade of her lashes.

"No," he said coldly, turning away.

Yet unsatisfactory as these brief interviews were, they revived in Miss Keene the sympathizing curiosity and interest she had always felt for this singular man, and which had been only held in abeyance at the beginning of their exile; in fact, she found herself thinking of him more during the interval when they seldom saw each other, and apparently had few interests in common, than when they were together on the *Excelsior*. Gradually she slipped into three successive phases of feeling towards him, each of them marked with an equal degree of peril to her peace of mind. She began with a profound interest in the mystery of his secluded habits, his strange abstraction, and a recognition of the evident superiority of a nature capable of such deep feeling — uninfluenced by those baser distractions which occupied Brace, Crosby, and Winslow. This phase passed into a settled conviction that some woman was at the root of his trouble, and responsible for it. With an instinctive distrust of her own sex, she was satisfied that it must be either a misplaced or unworthy attachment, and that the unknown woman was to blame. This second phase — which hovered between compassion and resentment — suddenly changed to the latter — the third phase of her feelings. Miss Keene became convinced that Mr. Hurlstone had a settled aversion to *herself*. Why and wherefore, she did not attempt to reason, yet she was satisfied that from the

first he disliked her. His studious reserve on the Excelsior, compared with the attentions of the others, ought then to have convinced her of the fact ; and there was no doubt now that his present discontent could be traced to the unfortunate circumstances that brought them together. Having given herself up to that idea, she vacillated between a strong impulse to inform him that she knew his real feelings and an equally strong instinct to avoid him hereafter entirely. The result was a feeble compromise. On the ground that Mr. Hurlstone could "scarcely be expected to admire her inferior performances," she declined to invite him with Father Esteban to listen to her pupils. Father Esteban took a huge pinch of snuff, examined Miss Keene attentively, and smiled a sad smile. The next day he begged Hurlstone to take a volume of old music to Miss Keene with his compliments. Hurlstone did so, and for some reason exerted himself to be agreeable. As he made no allusion to her rudeness, she presumed he did not know of it, and speedily forgot it herself. When he suggested a return visit to the boy choir, with whom he occasionally practiced, she blushed and feared she had scarcely the time. But she came with Mrs. Markham, some consciousness, and a visible color !

And then, almost without her knowing how or why, and entirely unexpected and unheralded, came a day so strangely and unconsciously happy, so innocently sweet and joyous, that it seemed as if all the other days of her exile had only gone before to create it, and as if it — and it alone — were a sufficient reason for her being there. A day full of gentle intimations, laughing suggestions, childlike surprises and awakenings ; a day delicious for the very incompleteness of its vague happiness. And this remarkable day was simply marked in Mrs. Markham's diary as follows :— "Went with E. to Indian village ; met Padre and J. H. J. H. actually left shell and crawled on beach with E. E. chatty."

The day itself had been singularly quiet and gracious, even for that rare climate of balmy days and recuperating nights. At times the slight breath of the sea which usually stirred the morning air of Todos Santos was suspended, and a hush of expectation seemed to arrest land and water. When Miss Keene and Mrs. Markham left the Presidio, the tide was low, and their way lay along the beach past the Mission walls. A walk of two or three miles brought them to the Indian village — properly a suburban quarter of Todos Santos — a collection of adobe huts and rudely cultivated fields. Padre Esteban and Mr. Hurlstone were awaiting them in the palm-thatched veranda of a more pretentious cabin, that served as a school-room. "This is Don Diego's design," said the Padre, beaming with a certain paternal pride on Hurlstone, "built by himself and helped by the heathen; but look you: my gentleman is not satisfied with it, and wishes now to bring his flock to the Mission school, and have them mingle with the pure-blooded races on an equality. That is the revolutionary idea of this *sans culotte* reformer," continued the good Father, shaking his yellow finger with gentle archness at the young man. "Ah, we shall yet have a revolution in Todos Santos unless you ladies take him in hand. He has already brought the half-breeds over to his side, and those heathens follow him like dumb cattle anywhere. There, take him away and scold him, Doña Leonor, while I speak to the Señora Markham of the work that her good heart and skillful fingers may do for my poor muchachos."

Eleanor Keene lifted her beautiful eyes to Hurlstone with an artless tribute in their depths that brought the blood faintly into his cheek. She was not thinking of the priest's admonishing words; she was thinking of the quiet, unselfish work that this gloomy misanthrope had been doing while his companions had been engaged in

lower aims and listless pleasures, and while she herself had been aimlessly fretting and diverting herself. What were her few hours of applauded instruction with the pretty Murillo-like children of the Fort compared to his silent and unrecognized labor! Yet even at this moment an uneasy doubt crossed her mind.

"I suppose Mrs. Brimmer and Miss Chubb interest themselves greatly in your — in the Padre's charities?"

The first playful smile she had seen on Hurlstone's face lightened in his eyes and lips, and was becoming.

"I am afraid my barbarians are too low and too near home for Mrs. Brimmer's missionary zeal. She and Miss Chubb patronize the Mexican school with cast-off dresses, old bonnets retrimmed, flannel petticoats, some old novels and books of poetry — of which the Padre makes an auto-da-fé — and their own patronizing presence on fête days. Providence has given them the vague impression that leprosy and contagious skin-disease are a peculiarity of the southern aborigine, and they have left me severely alone."

"I wish you would prevail upon the Padre to let *me* help you," said Miss Keene, looking down.

"But you already have the Commander's chickens — which you are bringing up as swans, by the way," said Hurlstone mischievously. "You would n't surely abandon the nest again?"

"You are laughing at me," said Miss Keene, putting on a slight pout to hide the vague pleasure that Hurlstone's gayer manner was giving her. "But, really, I've been thinking that the Presidio children are altogether too pretty and picturesque for me, and that I enjoy them too much to do them any good. It's like playing with them, you know!"

Hurlstone laughed, but suddenly looking down upon her face he was struck with its youthfulness. She had

always impressed him before — through her reserve and independence — as older, and more matured in character. He did not know how lately she was finding her lost youth as he asked her, quite abruptly, if she ever had any little brothers and sisters.

The answer to this question involved the simple story of Miss Keene's life, which she gave with naïve detail. She told him of her early childhood, and the brother who was only an indistinct memory ; of her school days, and her friendships up to the moment of her first step into the great world that was so strangely arrested at Todos Santos. He was touched with the almost pathetic blankness of this virgin page. Encouraged by his attention, and perhaps feeling a sympathy she had lately been longing for, she confessed to him the thousand little things which she had reserved from even Mrs. Markham during her first apathetic weeks at Todos Santos.

"I'm sure I should have been much happier if I had had any one to talk to," she added, looking up into his face with a naïveté of faint reproach ; "it's very different for men, you know. They can always distract themselves with something. Although," she continued hesitatingly, "I've sometimes thought *you* would have been happier if you had had somebody to tell your troubles to — I don't mean the Padre ; for, good as he is, he is a foreigner, you know, and would n't look upon things as *we* do — but some one in sympathy with you."

She stopped, alarmed at the change of expression in his face. A quick flush had crossed his cheek ; for an instant he had looked suspiciously into her questioning eyes. But the next moment the idea of his quietly selecting this simple, unsophisticated girl as the confidant of his miserable marriage, and the desperation that had brought him there, struck him as being irresistibly ludicrous ; and he smiled. It was the first time that the

habitual morbid intensity of his thoughts on that one subject had ever been disturbed by reaction ; it was the first time that a clear ray of reason had pierced the gloom in which he had enwrapped it. Seeing him smile, the young girl smiled too. Then they smiled together vaguely and sympathetically, as over some unspoken confidence. But, unknown and unsuspected by himself, that smile had completed his emancipation and triumph. The next moment, when he sought with a conscientious sigh to re-enter his old mood, he was half shocked to find it gone. Whatever gradual influence — the outcome of these few months of rest and repose — may have already been at work to dissipate his clouded fancy, he was only vaguely conscious that the laughing breath of the young girl had blown it away forever.

The perilous point passed, unconsciously to both of them, they fell into freer conversation, tacitly avoiding the subject of Mr. Hurlstone's past reserve only as being less interesting. Hurlstone did not return Miss Keene's confidences — not because he wished to deceive her, but that he preferred to entertain her ; while she did not care to know his secret now that it no longer affected their sympathy in other things. It was a pleasant, innocent selfishness, that, however, led them along, step by step, to more uncertain and difficult ground.

In their idle, happy walk they had strayed towards the beach, and had come upon a large stone cross with its base half hidden in sand, and covered with small tenacious, sweet-scented creepers, bearing a pale lilac blossom that exhaled a mingled odor of sea and shore. Hurlstone pointed out the cross as one of the earliest outposts of the Church on the edge of the unclaimed heathen wilderness. It was hung with strings of gaudy shells and feathers, which Hurlstone explained were votive offerings in which their pagan superstitions still mingled with their new faith.

"I don't like to worry that good old Padre," he continued, with a light smile, "but I'm afraid that they prefer this cross to the chapel for certain heathenish reasons of their own. I am quite sure that they still hold some obscure rites here under the good Father's very nose, and that, in the guise of this emblem of our universal faith, they worship some deity we have no knowledge of."

"It's a shame," said Miss Keene quickly.

To her surprise, Hurlstone did not appear so shocked as she, in her belief of his religious sympathy with the Padre, had imagined.

"They're a harmless race," he said carelessly. "The place is much frequented by the children — especially the young girls; a good many of these offerings came from them."

The better to examine these quaint tributes, Miss Keene had thrown herself, with an impulsive, girlish abandonment, on the mound by the cross, and Hurlstone sat down beside her. Their eyes met in an innocent pleasure of each other's company. She thought him very handsome in the dark, half official Mexican dress that necessity alone had obliged him to assume, and much more distinguished-looking than his companions in their extravagant foppery; he thought her beauty more youthful and artless than he had imagined it to be, and with his older and graver experiences felt a certain protecting superiority that was pleasant and reassuring.

Nevertheless, seated so near each other, they were very quiet. Hurlstone could not tell whether it was the sea or the flowers, but the dress of the young girl seemed to exhale some subtle perfume of her own freshness that half took away his breath. She had scraped up a handful of sand, and was allowing it to escape through her slim fingers in a slender rain on the ground. He was

watching the operation with what he began to fear was fatuous imbecility.

"Miss Keene? — I beg your pardon" —

"Mr. Hurlstone? — Excuse me, you were saying" —

They had both spoken at the same moment, and smiled forgivingly at each other. Hurlstone gallantly insisted upon the precedence of her thought — the scamp had doubted the coherency of his own.

"I used to think," she began — "you won't be angry, will you?"

"Decidedly not."

"I used to think you had an idea of becoming a priest."

"Why?"

"Because — you are sure you won't be angry — because I thought you hated women!"

"Father Esteban is a priest," said Hurlstone, with a faint smile, "and you know he thinks kindly of your sex."

"Yes; but perhaps *his* life was never spoiled by some wicked woman — like — like yours."

For an instant he gazed intently into her eyes.

"Who told you that?"

"No one."

She was evidently speaking the absolute truth. There was no deceit or suppression in her clear gaze; if anything, only the faintest look of wonder at his astonishment. And he — this jealously guarded secret, the curse of his whole wretched life, had been guessed by this simple girl, without comment, without reserve, without horror! And there had been no scene, no convulsion of Nature, no tragedy; he had not thrown himself into yonder sea; she had not fled from him shrinking, but was sitting there opposite to him in gentle smiling expectation, the golden light of Todos Santos around them, a bit of bright ribbon shining in her dark hair, and he, mis-

erable, outcast, and recluse, had not even changed his position, but was looking up without tremulousness or excitement, and smiling, too.

He raised himself suddenly on his knee.

"And what if it were all true?" he demanded.

"I should be very sorry for you, and glad it were all over now," she said softly.

A faint pink flush covered her cheek the next moment, as if she had suddenly become aware of another meaning in her speech, and she turned her head hastily towards the village. To her relief she discerned that a number of Indian children had approached them from behind and had halted a few paces from the cross. Their hands were full of flowers and shells as they stood hesitatingly watching the couple.

"They are some of the school-children," said Hurlstone, in answer to her inquiring look; "but I can't understand why they come here so openly."

"Oh, don't scold them!" said Eleanor, forgetting her previous orthodox protest; "let us go away, and pretend we don't notice them."

But as she was about to rise to her feet the hesitation of the little creatures ended in a sudden advance of the whole body, and before she comprehended what they were doing they had pressed the whole of their floral tributes in her lap. The color rose again quickly to her laughing face as she looked at Hurlstone.

"Do you usually get up this pretty surprise for visitors?" she said hesitatingly.

"I assure you I have nothing to do with it," he answered, with frank amazement; "it's quite spontaneous. And look — they are even decorating *me*."

It was true; they had thrown a half dozen strings of shells on Hurlstone's unresisting shoulders, and, unheeding the few words he laughingly addressed them in their

own dialect, they ran off a few paces, and remained standing, as if gravely contemplating their work. Suddenly, with a little outcry of terror, they turned, fled wildly past them, and disappeared in the bushes.

Miss Keene and Hurlstone rose at the same moment, but the young girl, taking a step forward, suddenly staggered, and was obliged to clasp one of the arms of the cross to keep herself from falling. Hurlstone sprang to her side.

"Are you ill?" he asked hurriedly. "You are quite white. What is the matter?"

A smile crossed her colorless face.

"I am certainly very giddy; everything seems to tremble."

"Perhaps it is the flowers," he said anxiously. "Their heavy perfume in this close air affects you. Throw them away, for Heaven's sake!"

But she clutched them tighter to her heart as she leaned for a moment, pale yet smiling, against the cross.

"No, no!" she said earnestly; "it was not that. But the children were frightened, and their alarm terrified me. There, it is over now."

She let him help her to her seat again as he glanced hurriedly around him. It must have been sympathy with her, for he was conscious of a slight vertigo himself. The air was very close and still. Even the pleasant murmur of the waves had ceased.

"How very low the tide is!" said Eleanor Keene, resting her elbow on her knees and her round chin upon her hand. "I wonder if that could have frightened those dear little midgets?" The tide, in fact, had left the shore quite bare and muddy for nearly a quarter of a mile to seaward.

Hurlstone arose, with grave eyes, but a voice that was unchanged.

"Suppose we inquire? Lean on my arm, and we'll go up the hill towards the Mission garden. Bring your flowers with you."

The color had quite returned to her cheek as she leant on his proffered arm. Yet perhaps she was really weaker than she knew, for he felt the soft pressure of her hand and the gentle abandonment of her figure against his own as they moved on. But for some preoccupying thought, he might have yielded more completely to the pleasure of that innocent contact and have drawn her closer towards him; yet they moved steadily on, he contenting himself from time to time with a hurried glance at the downcast fringes of the eyes beside him. Presently he stopped, his attention disturbed by what appeared to be the fluttering of a black-winged, red-crested bird, in the bushes before him. The next moment he discovered it to be the rose-covered head of Doña Isabel, who was running towards them. Eleanor withdrew her arm from Hurlstone's.

"Ah, imbecile!" said Doña Isabel, pouncing upon Eleanor Keene like an affectionate panther. "They have said you were on the seashore, and I fly for you as a bird. Tell to me quick," she whispered, hastily putting her own little brown ear against Miss Keene's mouth, "*inmediatamente*, are you much happy?"

"Where is Mr. Brace?" said Miss Keene, trying to effect a diversion, as she laughed and struggled to get free from her tormentor.

"He, the idiot boy! Naturally, when he is for use, he comes not. But as a maniac — ever! I would that I have him no more. You will to me presently give you — brother! I have since to-day a *presentimiento* that him I shall love! Ah!"

She pressed her little brown fist, still tightly clutching her fan, against her low bodice, as if already transfixed with a secret and absorbing passion.

"Well, you shall have Dick then," said Miss Keene, laughing; "but was it for *that* you were seeking me?"

"Mother of God! you know not then what has happened? You are a blind — a deaf — to but one thing all the time? Ah!" she said quickly, unfolding her fan and modestly diving her little head behind it, "I have ashamed for you, Miss Keene."

"But *what* has happened?" said Hurlstone, interposing to relieve his companion. "We fancied something" —

"Something! he says something! — ah, that something was a *temblor*! An earthquake! The earth has shaken himself. Look!"

She pointed with her fan to the shore, where the sea had suddenly returned in a turbulence of foam and billows that was breaking over the base of the cross they had just quitted.

Miss Keene drew a quick sigh. Doña Isabel had ducked again modestly behind her fan, but this time dragging with her other arm Miss Keene's head down to share its discreet shadow as she whispered, —

"And — infatuated one! — you two never noticed it!"

CHAPTER V.

CLOUDS AND CHANGE.

THE earthquake shock, although the first experienced by the Americans, had been a yearly phenomenon to the people of Todos Santos, and was so slight as to leave little impression upon either the low adobe walls of the pueblo or the indolent population. "If it's a provision of Nature for shaking up these Rip Van Winkle Latin races now and then, it's a dead failure, as far as Todos Santos is concerned," Crosby had said, with a yawn. "Brace, who's got geology on the brain ever since he struck cinnabar ore, says he is n't sure the Injins ain't right when they believe that the Pacific Ocean used to roll straight up to the Presidio, and there was n't any channel — and that reef of rocks was upheaved in their time. But what's the use of it? it never really waked them up." "Perhaps they're waiting for another kind of earthquake," Winslow had responded sententiously.

In six weeks it had been forgotten, except by three people — Miss Keene, James Hurlstone, and Padre Esteban. Since Hurlstone had parted with Miss Keene on that memorable afternoon he had apparently lapsed into his former reserve. Without seeming to avoid her timid advances, he met her seldom, and then only in the presence of the Padre or Mrs. Markham. Although uneasy at the deprivation of his society, his present shyness did not affect her as it had done at first: she knew it was no longer indifference; she even fancied she understood it from what had been her own feelings. If he no longer

raised his eyes to hers as frankly as he had that day, she felt a more delicate pleasure in the consciousness of his lowered eyelids when they met, and the instinct that told her when his melancholy glance followed her unobserved. The sex of these lovers — if we may call them so who had never exchanged a word of love — seemed to be changed. It was Miss Keene who now sought him with a respectful and frank admiration; it was Hurlstone who now tried to avoid it with a feminine dread of reciprocal display. Once she had even adverted to the episode of the cross. They were standing under the arch of the refectory door, waiting for Padre Esteban, and looking towards the sea.

"Do you think we were ever in any real danger, down there, on the shore — that day?" she said timidly.

"No; not from the sea," he replied, looking at her with a half defiant resolution.

"From what then?" she asked, with a naïveté that was yet a little conscious.

"Do you remember the children giving you their offerings that day?" he asked abruptly.

"I do," she replied, with smiling eyes.

"Well, it appears that it is the custom for the betrothed couples to come to the cross to exchange their vows. They mistook us for lovers."

All the instinctive delicacy of Miss Keene's womanhood resented the rude infelicity of this speech and the flip-pant manner of its utterance. She did not blush, but lifted her clear eyes calmly to his.

"It was an unfortunate mistake," she said coldly, "the more so as they were your pupils. Ah! here is Father Esteban," she added, with a marked tone of relief, as she crossed over to the priest's side.

When Father Esteban returned to the refectory that evening, Hurlstone was absent. When it grew later, be-

coming uneasy, the good Father sought him in the garden. At the end of the avenue of pear-trees there was a break in the sea-wall, and here, with his face to the sea, Hurlstone was leaning gloomily. Father Esteban's tread was noiseless, and he had laid his soft hand on the young man's shoulder before Hurlstone was aware of his presence. He started slightly, his gloomy eyes fell before the priest's.

"My son," said the old man gravely, "this must go on no longer."

"I don't understand you," Hurlstone replied coldly.

"Do not try to deceive yourself, nor me. Above all, do not try to deceive *her*. Either you are or are not in love with this countrywoman of yours. If you are not, my respect for her and my friendship for you prompts me to save you both from a foolish intimacy that may ripen into a misplaced affection; if you are already in love with her" —

"I have never spoken a word of love to her!" interrupted Hurlstone quickly. "I have even tried to avoid her since" —

"Since you found that you loved her! Ah, foolish boy! and you think that because the lips speak not, the passions of the heart are stilled! Do you think your silence in her presence is not a protestation that she, even she, child as she is, can read, with the cunning of her sex?"

"Well — if I am in love with her, what then?" said Hurlstone doggedly. "It is no crime to love a pure and simple girl. Am I not free? You yourself, in yonder church, told me" —

"Silence, Diego," said the priest sternly. "Silence, before you utter the thought that shall disgrace you to speak and me to hear!"

"Forgive me, Father Esteban," said the young man

hurriedly, grasping both hands of the priest. "Forgive me — I am mad — distracted — but I swear to you I only meant" —

"Hush!" interrupted the priest more gently. "So; that will do." He stopped, drew out his snuff-box, rapped the lid, and took a pinch of snuff slowly. "We will not recur to that point. Then you have told her the story of your life?"

"No; but I will. She shall know all — everything — before I utter a word of love to her."

"Ah! *bueno! muy bueno!*" said the Padre, wiping his nose ostentatiously. "Ah! let me see! Then, when we have shown her that we cannot possibly marry her, we will begin to make love to her! Eh, eh! that is the American fashion. Ah, pardon!" he continued, in response to a gesture of protestation from Hurlstone; "I am wrong. It is when we have told her that we cannot marry her as a Protestant, that we will make love as a Catholic. Is that it?"

"Hear me," said Hurlstone passionately. "You have saved me from madness and, perhaps, death. Your care — your kindness — your teachings have given me life again. Don't blame me, Father Esteban, if, in casting off my old self, you have given me hopes of a new and fresher life — of" —

"A newer and fresher love, you would say," said the Padre, with a sad smile. "Be it so. You will at least do justice to the old priest, when you remember that he never pressed you to take vows that would have prevented this forever."

"I know it," said Hurlstone, taking the old man's hand. "And you will remember, too, that I was happy and contented before this came upon me. Tell me what I shall do. Be my guide — my friend, Father Esteban. Put me where I was a few months ago — before I learned to love her."

"Do you mean it, Diego?" said the old man, grasping his hand tightly, and fixing his eyes upon him.

"I do."

"Then listen to me, for it is my turn to speak. When, eight months ago, you sought the shelter of that blessed roof, it was for refuge from a woman that had cursed your life. It was given you. You would leave it now to commit an act that would bring another woman, as mad as yourself, clamoring at its doors for protection from *you*. For what you are proposing to this innocent girl is what you accepted from the older and wickeder woman. You have been cursed because a woman divided for you what was before God an indivisible right; and you, Diego, would now redivide that with another, whom you dare to say you *love*! You would use the opportunity of her helplessness and loneliness here to convince her; you would tempt her with sympathy, for she is unhappy; with companionship, for she has no longer the world to choose from — with everything that should make her sacred from your pursuit."

"Enough," said Hurlstone hoarsely; "say no more. Only I implore you tell me what to do now to save her. I will — if you tell me to do it — leave her forever."

"Why should *you* go?" said the priest quietly. "*Her* absence will be sufficient."

"*Her* absence?" echoed Hurlstone.

"Hers alone. The conditions that brought *you* here are unchanged. You are still in need of an asylum from the world and the wife you have repudiated. Why should you abandon it? For the girl, there is no cause why she should remain — beyond yourself. She has a brother whom she loves — who wants her — who has the right to claim her at any time. She will go to him."

"But how?"

"That has been my secret, and will be my sacrifice to

you, Diego, my son. I have foreseen all this ; I have expected it from the day that girl sent you her woman's message, that was half a challenge, from her school — I have known it from the day you walked together on the sea-shore. I was blind before that — for I am weak in my way, too, and I had dreamed of other things. God has willed it otherwise." He paused, and returning the pressure of Hurlstone's hand, went on. "My secret and my sacrifice for you is this. For the last two hundred years the Church has had a secret and trusty messenger from the See at Guadalajara — in a ship that touches here for a few hours only every three years. Her arrival and departure is known only to myself and my brothers of the Council. By this wisdom and the provision of God, the integrity of the Holy Church and the conversion of the heathen have been maintained without interruption and interference. You know now, my son, why your comrades were placed under surveillance ; why it was necessary that the people should believe in a political conspiracy among yourselves, rather than the facts as they existed, which might have bred a dangerous curiosity among them. I have given you our secret, Diego — that is but a part of my sacrifice. When that ship arrives, and she is expected daily, I will secretly place Miss Keene and her friend on board, with explanatory letters to the Archbishop, and she will be assisted to rejoin her brother. It will be against the wishes of the Council ; but my will," continued the old man, with a gesture of imperiousness, "is the will of the Church, and the law that overrides all."

He had stopped, with a strange fire in his eyes. It still continued to burn as he went on rapidly, —

"You will understand the sacrifice I am making in telling you this, when you know that I could have done all that I propose without your leave or hindrance. Yes,

Diego ; I had but to stretch out my hand thus, and that foolish fire-brand of a heretic *muchacha* would have vanished from Todos Santos forever. I could have left you in your fool's paradise, and one morning you would have found her gone. I should have condoled with you, and consoled you, and you would have forgotten her as you did the other. I should not have hesitated ; it is the right of the Church through all time to break through those carnal ties without heed of the suffering flesh, and I ought to have done so. This, and this alone, would have been worthy of Las Casas and Junipero Serra ! But I am weak and old — I am no longer fit for His work. Far better that the ship which takes her away should bring back my successor and one more worthy Todos Santos than I."

He stopped, his eyes dimmed, he buried his face in his hands.

"You have done right, Father Esteban," said Hurlstone, gently putting his arm round the priest's shoulders, "and I swear to you your secret is as safe as if you had never revealed it to me. Perhaps," he added, with a sigh, "I should have been happier if I had not known it — if she had passed out of my life as mysteriously as she had entered it ; but you will try to accept my sacrifice as some return for yours. I shall see her no more."

"But will you swear it?" said the priest eagerly. "Will you swear that you will not even seek her to say farewell ; for in that moment the wretched girl may shake your resolution?"

"I shall not see her," repeated the young man slowly.

"But if she asks an interview," persisted the priest, "on the pretense of having your advice?"

"She will not," returned Hurlstone, with a half bitter recollection of their last parting. "You do not know her pride."

"Perhaps," said the priest musingly. "But I have *your* word, Diego. And now let us return to the Mission, for there is much to prepare, and you shall assist me."

Meantime, Hurlstone was only half right in his estimate of Miss Keene's feelings, although the result was the same. The first shock to her delicacy in his abrupt speech had been succeeded by a renewal of her uneasiness concerning his past life or history. While she would, in her unselfish attachment for him, have undoubtingly accepted any explanation he might have chosen to give her, his continued reserve and avoidance of her left full scope to her imaginings. Rejecting any hypothesis of his history except that of some unfortunate love episode, she began to think that perhaps he still loved this nameless woman. Had anything occurred to renew his affection? It was impossible, in their isolated condition, that he would hear from her. But perhaps the priest might have been a confidant of his past, and had recalled the old affection in rivalry of her? Or had she herself been unfortunate through any idle word to reopen the wound? Had there been any suggestion?—she checked herself suddenly at a thought that benumbed and chilled her!—perhaps that happy hour at the cross might have reminded him of some episode with another? That was the real significance of his rude speech. With this first taste of the poison of jealousy upon her virgin lips, she seized the cup and drank it eagerly. Ah, well—he should keep his blissful recollections of the past undisturbed by her. Perhaps he might even see—though *she* had no past—that her present life might be as disturbing to him! She recalled, with a foolish pleasure, his solitary faint sneer at the devotion of the Commander's Secretary. Why should n't she, hereafter, encourage that devotion as well as that sneer from this complacently beloved Mr. Hurl-

stone? Why should he be so assured of her past? The fair and gentle reader who may be shocked at this revelation of Eleanor Keene's character will remember that she has not been recorded as an angel in these pages—but as a very human, honest, inexperienced girl, for the first time struggling with the most diplomatic, Machiavelian, and hypocritical of all the passions.

In pursuance of this new resolution, she determined to accept an invitation from Mrs. Markham to accompany her and the Commander to a reception at the Alcalde's house—the happy Secretary being of the party. Mrs. Markham, who was under promise to the Comandante not to reveal his plan for the escape of herself and Miss Keene until the arrival of the expected transport, had paid little attention to the late vagaries of her friend, and had contented herself by once saying, with a marked emphasis, that the more free they kept themselves from any entanglements with other people, the more prepared they would be for *a change*.

"Perhaps it's just as well not to be too free, even with those Jesuits over at the Mission. Your brother, you know, might not like it."

"*Those Jesuits!*" repeated Miss Keene indignantly. "Father Esteban, to begin with, is a Franciscan, and Mr. Hurlstone is as orthodox as you or I."

"Don't be too sure of that, my dear," returned Mrs. Markham sententiously. "Heaven only knows what disguises they assume. Why, Hurlstone and the priest are already as thick as two peas; and you can't make me believe they did n't know of each other before we came here. He was the first one ashore, you remember, before the mutiny; and where did he turn up?—at the Mission, of course! And have you forgotten that sleep-walking affair—all Jesuitical! Why, poor dear Markham used to say we were surrounded by ramifications of

that society — everywhere. The very waiter at your hotel table might belong to the Order.”

The hour of the siesta was just past, and the corridor and gardens of the Alcalde's house were grouped with friends and acquaintances as the party from the Presidio entered. Mrs. Brimmer, who had apparently effected a temporary compromise with her late instincts of propriety, was still doing the honors of the Alcalde's house, and had once more assumed the Mexican dishabille, even to the slight exposure of her small feet, stockingless, in white satin slippers. The presence of the Comandante and his Secretary guaranteed the two ladies of their party a reception at least faultless in form and respect, whatever may have been the secret feelings of the hostess and her friends. The Alcalde received Mrs. Markham and Miss Keene with unruffled courtesy, and conducted them to the place of honor beside him.

As Eleanor Keene, slightly flushed and beautiful in her unwonted nervous excitement, took her seat, a flutter went around the corridor, and, with the single exception of Doña Isabel, an almost imperceptible drawing together of the other ladies, in offensive alliance. Miss Keene had never abandoned her own style of dress; and that afternoon her delicate and closely-fitting white muslin, gathered in at the waist with a broad blue belt of ribbon, seemed to accentuate somewhat unflatteringly the tropical *négligé* of Mrs. Brimmer and Miss Chubb. Brace, who was in attendance, with Crosby, on the two Ramirez girls, could not help being uneasily conscious of this, in addition to the awkwardness of meeting Miss Keene after the transfer of his affections elsewhere. Nor was his embarrassment relieved by Crosby's confidences to him, in a half audible whisper, —

“I say, old man, after all, the regular straight-out American style lays over all their foreign flops and fan-

doodles. I wonder what old Brimmer would say to his wife's full-dress nightgown—eh?"

But at this moment the long-drawn, slightly stridulous utterances of Mrs. Brimmer rose through the other greetings like a lazy east wind.

"I shall never forgive the Commander for making the Presidio so attractive to you, dear Miss Keene, that you cannot really find time to see your own countrymen. Though, of course, you're not to blame for not coming to see two frights as we must look—not having been educated to be able to do up our dresses in that faultless style—and perhaps not having the entire control over an establishment like you; yet, I suppose that, even if the Alcalde did give us *carte blanche* of the laundry *here*, we could n't do it, unaided even by Mrs. Markham. Yes, dear; you must let me compliment you on your skill, and the way you make things last. As for me and Miss Chubb, we've only found our things fit to be given away to the poor of the Mission. But I suppose even that charity would look as shabby to you as our clothes, in comparison with the really good missionary work you and Mr. Hurlstone—or is it Mr. Brace?—I always found your admirers, my dear—are doing now. At least, so says that good Father Esteban."

But with the exception of the Alcalde and Miss Chubb, Mrs. Brimmer's words fell on unheeding ears, and Miss Keene did not prejudice the triumph of her own superior attractions by seeming to notice Mrs. Brimmer's innuendo. She answered briefly, and entered into lively conversation with Crosby and the Secretary, holding the hand of Doña Isabel in her own, as if to assure her that she was guiltless of any design against her former admirer. This was quite unnecessary, as the gentle Isabel, after bidding Brace, with a rap on the knuckles, to "go and play," contented herself with curling up like a kitten

beside Miss Keene, and left that gentleman to wander somewhat aimlessly in the patio.

Nevertheless, Miss Keene, whose eyes and ears were nervously alert, and who had indulged a faint hope of meeting Padre Esteban and hearing news of Hurlstone, glanced from time to time towards the entrance of the patio. A singular presentiment that some outcome of this present visit would determine her relations with Hurlstone had already possessed her. Consequently she was conscious, before it had attracted the attention of the others, of some vague stirring in the plaza beyond. Suddenly the clatter of hoofs was heard before the gateway. There was a moment's pause of dismounting, a gruff order given in Spanish, and the next moment three strangers entered the patio.

They were dressed in red shirts, their white trousers tucked in high boots, and wore slouched hats. They were so travel-stained, dusty, and unshaven, that their features were barely distinguishable. One, who appeared to be the spokesman of the party, cast a perfunctory glance around the corridor, and, in fluent Spanish, began with the mechanical air of a man repeating some formula, —

"We are the bearers of a despatch to the Comandante of Todos Santos from the Governor of Mazatlan. The officer and the escort who came with us are outside the gate. We have been told that the Comandante is in this house. The case is urgent, or we would not intrude" —

He was stopped by the voice of Mrs. Markham from the corridor. "Well, I don't understand Spanish much — I may be a fool, or crazy, or perhaps both — but if that is n't James Markham's *voice*, I'll bet a cooky!"

The three strangers turned quickly toward the corridor. The next moment the youngest of their party advanced eagerly towards Miss Keene, who had arisen with a half

frightened joy, and with the cry of "Why, it's Nell!" ran towards her. The third man came slowly forward as Mrs. Brimmer slipped hastily from the hammock and stood erect.

"In the name of goodness, Barbara," said Mr. Brimmer, closing upon her, in a slow, portentous whisper, "where *are* your stockings?"

CHAPTER VI.

A MORE IMPORTANT ARRIVAL.

THE Commander was the first to recover his presence of mind. Taking the despatch from the hands of the unlooked-for husband of the woman he loved, he opened it with an immovable face and habitual precision. Then, turning with a military salute to the strangers, he bade them join him in half an hour at the Presidio; and, bowing gravely to the assembled company, stepped from the corridor. But Mrs. Markham was before him, stopped him with a gesture, and turned to her husband.

"James Markham — where's your hand?"

Markham, embarrassed but subjugated, disengaged it timidly from his wife's waist.

"Give it to that gentleman — for a gentleman he is, from the crown of his head to the soles of his boots! There! Shake his hand! You don't get such a chance every day. You can thank him again, later."

As the two men's hands parted, after this perfunctory grasp, and the Commander passed on, she turned again to her husband.

"Now, James, I am ready to hear all about it. Perhaps you'll tell me where you *have* been?"

There was a moment of embarrassing silence. The Doctor and Secretary had discreetly withdrawn; the Alcalde, after a brief introduction to Mr. Brimmer, and an incomprehensible glance from the wife, had retired with a colorless face. Doña Isabel had lingered last to blow a kiss across her fan to Eleanor Keene that half

mischievously included her brother. The Americans were alone.

Thus appealed to, Mr. Markham hastily began his story. But, as he progressed, a slight incoherency was noticeable: he occasionally contradicted himself, and was obliged to be sustained, supplemented, and, at times, corrected, by Keene and Brimmer. Substantially, it appeared that they had come from San Francisco to Mazatlan, and, through the influence of Mr. Brimmer on the Mexican authorities, their party, with an escort of dragoons, had been transported across the gulf and landed on the opposite shore, where they had made a forced march across the desert to Todos Santos. Literally interpreted, however, by the nervous Markham, it would seem that they had conceived this expedition long ago, and yet had difficulties because they only thought of it the day before the steamer sailed; that they had embarked for the isthmus of Nicaragua, and yet had stopped at Mazatlan; that their information was complete in San Francisco, and only picked up at Mazatlan; that "friends" — sometimes contradictorily known as "he" and "she" — had overpowering influence with the Mexican Government, and alone had helped them, and yet that they were utterly dependent upon the efforts of Señor Perkins, who had compromised matters with the Mexican Government and everybody.

"Do you mean to say, James Markham, that you've seen Perkins, and it was he who told you we were here?"

"No — not *him* exactly."

"Let me explain," said Mr. Brimmer hastily. "It appears," he corrected his haste with practical business-like precision, "that the filibuster Perkins, after debarking you here, and taking the Excelsior to Quinquambo, actually established the Quinquambo Government, and

got Mexico and the other confederacies to recognize its independence. Quinquinambo behaved very handsomely, and not only allowed the Mexican Government indemnity for breaking the neutrality of Todos Santos by the seizure, but even compromised with our own Government their claim to confiscate the *Excelsior* for treaty violation, and paid half the value of the vessel, besides giving information to Mexico and Washington of your whereabouts. We consequently represent a joint commission from both countries to settle the matter and arrange for your return."

"But what I want to know is this: Is it to Señor Perkins that we ought to be thankful for seeing you here at all?" asked Mrs. Markham impatiently.

"No, no — not that, exactly," stammered Markham. "Oh, come now, Susannah" —

"No," said Richard Keene earnestly; "by Jove! some thanks ought to go to Belle Montgomery" — He checked himself in sudden consternation.

There was a chilly silence. Even Miss Keene looked anxiously at her brother, as the voice of Mrs. Brimmer for the first time broke the silence.

"May we be permitted to know who is this person to whom we owe so great an obligation?"

"Certainly," said Brimmer. "She was — as I have already intimated — a friend; possibly, you know," he added, turning lightly to his companions, as if to corroborate an impression that had just struck him, "perhaps a — a — a sweetheart of the Señor Perkins."

"And how was she so interested in us, pray?" said Mrs. Markham.

"Well, you see, she had an idea that a former husband was on board of the *Excelsior*."

He stopped suddenly, remembering from the astonished faces of Keene and Markham that the secret was not

known to them, while they, impressed with the belief that the story was a sudden invention of Brimmer's, with difficulty preserved their composure. But the women were quick to notice their confusion, and promptly disbelieved Brimmer's explanation.

"Well, as there's no Mister Montgomery here, she's probably mistaken," said Mrs. Markham, with decision, "though it strikes *me* that she's very likely had the same delusion on board of some other ship. Come along, James; perhaps after you've had a bath and some clean clothes, you may come out a little more like the man I once knew. I don't know how Mrs. Brimmer feels, but I feel more as if I required to be introduced to you — than your friend's friend, Mrs. Montgomery. At any rate, try and look and behave a little more decent when you go over to the Presidio."

With these words she dragged him away. Mr. Brimmer, after a futile attempt to appear at his ease, promptly effected the usual marital diversion of carrying the war into the enemy's camp.

"For heaven's sake, Barbara," he said, with ostentatious indignation, "go and dress yourself properly. Had you neither money nor credit to purchase clothes? I declare I did n't know you at first; and when I did, I was shocked; before Mrs. Markham, too!"

"Mrs. Markham, I fear, has quite enough to occupy her now," said Mrs. Brimmer shortly, as she turned away, with hysterically moist eyes, leaving her husband to follow her.

Oblivious of this comedy, Richard Keene and Eleanor had already wandered back, hand in hand, to their days of childhood. But even in the joy that filled the young girl's heart in the presence of her only kinsman, there was a strange reservation. The meeting that she had looked forward to with eager longing had brought all she

expected ; more than that, it seemed to have been providentially anticipated at the moment of her greatest need, and yet it was incomplete. She was ashamed that after the first recognition, a wild desire to run to Hurlstone and tell *him* her happiness was her only thought. She was shocked that the bright joyous face of this handsome lovable boy could not shut out the melancholy austere features of Hurlstone, which seemed to rise reproachfully between them. When, for the third and fourth time, they had recounted their past history, exchanged their confidences and feelings, Dick, passing his arm around his sister's waist, looked down smilingly in her eyes.

"And so, after all, little Nell, everybody has been good to you, and you have been happy !"

"Everybody has been kind to me, Dick, far kinder than I deserved. Even if I had really been the great lady that little Doña Isabel thought I was, or the important person the Commander believed me to be, I could n't have been treated more kindly. I have met with nothing but respect and attention. I have been very happy, Dick, very happy."

And with a little cry she threw herself on her brother's neck and burst into a childlike flood of inconsistent tears.

Meantime the news of the arrival of the relief-party had penetrated even the peaceful cloisters of the Mission, and Father Esteban had been summoned in haste to the Council. He returned with an eager face to Hurlstone, who had been anxiously awaiting him. When the Padre had imparted the full particulars of the event to his companion, he added gravely, —

"You see, my son, how Providence, which has protected you since you first claimed the Church's sanctuary, has again interfered to spare me the sacrifice of using the power of the Church in purely mundane passions. I meekly accept the rebuke of His better-ordained ways,

and you, Diego, may comfort yourself that this girl is restored directly to her brother's care, without any deviousness of plan or human responsibility. You do not speak, my son!" continued the priest anxiously; "can it be possible that, in the face of this gracious approval of Providence to your resolution, you are regretting it?"

The young man replied, with a half reproachful gesture:

"Do you, then, think me still so weak? No, Father Esteban; I have steeled myself against my selfishness for her sake. I could have resigned her to the escape you had planned, believing her happier for it, and ignorant of the real condition of the man she had learnt to — to — pity. But," he added, turning suddenly and almost rudely upon the priest, "do you know the meaning of this irruption of the outer world to *me*? Do you reflect that these men probably know my miserable story? — that, as one of the passengers of the *Excelsior*, they will be obliged to seek me and to restore me," he added, with a bitter laugh, "to *my* home, *my* kindred — to the world I loathe?"

"But you need not follow them. Remain here."

"Here! — with the door thrown open to any talebearer or *perhaps to my wife herself*? Never! Hear me, Father," he went on hurriedly: "these men have come from San Francisco — have been to Mazatlan. Can you believe that it is possible that they have never heard of this woman's search for me? No! The quest of hate is as strong as the quest of love, and more merciless to the hunted."

"But if that were so, foolish boy, she would have accompanied them."

"You are wrong! It would have been enough for her to have sent my exposure by them — to have driven me from this refuge."

"This is but futile fancy, Diego," said Father Esteban, with a simulated assurance he was far from feeling. "Nothing has yet been said—nothing may be said. Wait, my child."

"Wait!" he echoed bitterly. "Ay, wait until the poor girl shall hear—perhaps from her brother's lips—the story of my marriage as bandied about by others; wait for her to know that the man who would have made her love him was another's, and unworthy of her respect? No! it is *I* who must leave this place, and at once."

"*You?*" echoed the Padre. "How?"

"By the same means you would have used for her departure. I must take her place in that ship you are expecting. You will give *me* letters to your friends. Perhaps, when this is over, I may return—if I still live."

Padre Esteban became thoughtful.

"You will not refuse me?" said the young man, taking the Padre's hand. "It is for the best, believe me. I will remain secret here until then. You will invent some excuse—illness, or what you like—to keep them from penetrating here. Above all, to spare me from the misery of ever reading my secret in her face."

Father Esteban remained still absorbed in thought.

"You will take a letter from me to the Archbishop, and put yourself under his care?" he asked at last, after a long pause. "You will promise me that?"

"I do!"

"Then we shall see what can be done. They talk, those *Americanos*," continued the priest, "of making their way up the coast to Punta St. Jago, where the ship they have already sent for to take them away can approach the shore; and the Comandante has orders to furnish them escort and transport to that point. It is a foolish indiscretion of the Government, and I warrant without the sanction of the Church. Already there is

curiosity, discontent, and wild talk among the people. Ah! thou sayest truly, my son," said the old man, gloomily; "the doors of Todos Santos are open. The Commandante will speed these heretics quickly on their way; but the doors by which they came and whence they go will never close again. But God's will be done! And if the open doors bring thee back, my son, I shall not question His will!"

It would seem, however, as if Hurlstone's fears had been groundless. For in the excitement of the succeeding days, and the mingling of the party from San Antonio with the new-comers, the recluse had been forgotten. So habitual had been his isolation from the others, that, except for the words of praise and gratitude hesitatingly dropped by Miss Keene to her brother, his name was not mentioned, and it might have been possible for the relieving party to have left him behind — unnoticed. Mr. Brimmer, for domestic reasons, was quite willing to allow the episode of Miss Montgomery's connection with their expedition to drop for the present. Her name was only recalled once by Miss Keene. When Dick had professed a sudden and violent admiration for the coquettish Doña Isabel, Eleanor had looked up in her brother's face with a half troubled air.

"Who was this queer Montgomery woman, Dick?" she said.

Dick laughed — a frank, reassuring, heart-free laugh.

"Perfectly stunning, Nell. Such a figure in tights! You ought to have seen her dance — my!"

"Hush! I dare say she was horrid!"

"Not at all! She was n't such a bad fellow, if you left out her poetry and gush, which I did n't go in for much, — though the other fellows" — he stopped, from a sudden sense of loyalty to Brimmer and Markham. "No; you see, Nell, she was regularly ridiculously struck after that

man Perkins, — whom she'd never seen, — a kind of schoolgirl worship for a pirate. You know how you women go in for those fellows with a mystery about 'em."

"No, I don't!" said Miss Keene sharply, with a slight rise of color; "and I don't see what that's got to do with you and her."

"Everything! She was in correspondence with Perkins, and knows about the Excelsior affair, and wants to help him get out of it with clean hands, don't you see! That's why she made up to us. There, Nell; she ain't your style, of course; but you owe a heap to her for giving us points as to where you were. But that's all over now; she left us at Mazatlan, and went on to Nicaragua to meet Perkins somewhere there — for the fellow has always got some Central American revolution on hand, it appears. Until they garrote or shoot him some day, he'll go on in the liberating business forever."

"Then there was n't any Mr. Montgomery, of course?" said Eleanor.

"Oh, Mr. Montgomery," said Dick, hesitating. "Well, you see, Nell, I think that, knowing how correct and all that sort of thing Brimmer is, she sort of invented the husband to make her interest look more proper."

"It's shameful!" said Miss Keene indignantly.

"Come, Nell; one would think you had a personal dislike to her. Let her go; she won't trouble you — nor, I reckon, *anybody*, much longer."

"What do you mean, Dick?"

"I mean she has regularly exhausted and burnt herself out with her hysterics and excitements, and the drugs she's taken to subdue them — to say nothing of the Panama fever she got last spring. If she don't go regularly crazy at last she'll have another attack of fever, hanging round the isthmus waiting for Perkins."

Meanwhile, undisturbed by excitement or intrusion of the outer world, the days had passed quietly at the Mission. But one evening, at twilight, a swift-footed, lightly-clad Indian glided into the sacristy as if he had slipped from the outlying fog, and almost immediately as quietly glided away again and disappeared. The next moment Father Esteban's gaunt and agitated face appeared at Hurlstone's door.

"My son, God has been merciful, and cut short your probation. The signal of the ship has just been made. Her boat will be waiting on the beach two leagues from here an hour hence. Are you ready? and are you still resolved?"

"I am," said Hurlstone, rising. "I have been prepared since you first assented."

The old man's lips quivered slightly, and the great brown hand laid upon the table trembled for an instant; with a strong effort he recovered himself, and said hurriedly, —

"Concho's mule is saddled and ready for you at the foot of the garden. You will follow the beach a league beyond the Indians' cross. In the boat will await you the trusty messenger of the Church. You will say to him, 'Guadalajara,' and give him these letters. One is to the captain. You will require no other introduction." He laid the papers on the table, and, turning to Hurlstone, lifted his tremulous hands in the air. "And now, my son, may the grace of God" —

He faltered and stopped, his uplifted arms falling helplessly on Hurlstone's shoulders. For an instant the young man supported him in his arms, then placed him gently in the chair he had just quitted, and for the first time in their intimacy dropped upon his knee before him. The old man, with a faint smile, placed his hand upon his companion's head. A breathless pause followed; Father

Esteban's lips moved silently. Suddenly the young man rose, pressed his lips hurriedly to the Father's hand, and passed out into the night.

The moon was already suffusing the dropping veil of fog above him with that nebulous, mysterious radiance he had noticed the first night he had approached the Mission. When he reached the cross he dismounted, and gathering a few of the sweet-scented blossoms that crept around its base, placed them in his breast. Then, remounting, he continued his way until he came to the spot designated by Concho as a fitting place to leave his tethered mule. This done, he proceeded on foot about a mile further along the hard, wet sand, his eyes fixed on the narrow strip of water and shore before him that was yet uninvaded by the fog on either side.

The misty, nebulous light, the strange silence, broken only by the occasional low hurried whisper of some spent wave that sent its film of spume across his path, or filled his footprints behind him, possessed him with vague presentiments and imaginings. At times he fancied he heard voices at his side; at times indistinct figures loomed through the mist before him. At last what seemed to be his own shadow faintly impinged upon the mist at one side impressed him so strongly that he stopped; the apparition stopped too. Continuing a few hundred paces further, he stopped again; but this time the ghostly figure passed on, and convinced him that it was no shadow, but some one actually following him. With an angry challenge he advanced towards it. It quickly retreated inland, and was lost. Irritated and suspicious he turned back towards the water, and was amazed to see before him, not twenty yards away, the object of his quest — a boat, with two men in it, kept in position by the occasional lazy dip of an oar. In the pursuit of his mysterious shadow he had evidently over-

looked it. As his own figure emerged from the fog, the boat pulled towards him. The priest's password was upon his lips, when he perceived that the *two* men were common foreign sailors; the messenger of the Church was evidently not there. Could it have been he who had haunted him? He paused irresolutely. "Is there none other coming?" he asked. The two men looked at each other. One said, "Quien sabe!" and shrugged his shoulders. Hurlstone without further hesitation leaped aboard.

The same dull wall of vapor—at times thickening to an almost impenetrable barrier, and again half suffocating him in its soft embrace—which he had breasted on the night he swam ashore, carried back his thoughts to that time, now so remote and unreal. And when, after a few moments' silent rowing, the boat approached a black hulk that seemed to have started forward out of the gloom to meet them, his vague recollection began to take a more definite form. As he climbed up the companion-ladder and boarded the vessel, an inexplicable memory came over him. A petty officer on the gangway advanced silently and ushered him, half dazed and bewildered, into the cabin. He glanced hurriedly around: the door of a state-room opened, and disclosed the indomitable and affable Señor Perkins! A slight expression of surprise, however, crossed the features of the Liberator of Quinquinambo as he advanced with outstretched hand.

"This is really a surprise, my dear fellow! I had no idea that *you* were in this affair. But I am delighted to welcome you once more to the Excelsior!"

CHAPTER VII.

THE RETURN OF THE EXCELSIOR.

AMAZED and disconcerted, Hurlstone, nevertheless, retained his presence of mind.

"There must be some mistake," he said coolly ; "I am certainly not the person you seem to be expecting."

"Were you not sent here by Winslow?" demanded Perkins.

"No. The person you are looking for is probably one I saw on the shore. He no doubt became alarmed at my approach, and has allowed me quite unwittingly to take his place in the boat."

Perkins examined Hurlstone keenly for a moment, stepped to the door, gave a brief order, and returned.

"Then, if you did not intend the honor of this visit for me," he resumed, with a smile, "may I ask, my dear fellow, whom you expected to meet, and on what ship? There are not so many at Todos Santos, if my memory serves me right, as to create confusion."

"I must decline to answer that question," said Hurlstone curtly.

The Señor smiled, with an accession of his old gentleness.

"My dear young friend," he said, "have you forgotten that on a far more important occasion to *you*, I showed no desire to pry into your secret?" Hurlstone made a movement of deprecation. "Nor have I any such desire now. But for the sake of our coming to an understanding as friends, let me answer the question for you. You are

here, my dear fellow, as a messenger from the Mission of Todos Santos to the Ecclesiastical Commission from Guadalajara, whose ship touches here every three years. It is now due. You have mistaken this vessel for theirs."

Hurlstone remained silent.

"It is no secret," continued Señor Perkins blandly; "nor shall I pretend to conceal *my* purpose here, which is on the invitation of certain distressed patriots of Todos Santos, to assist them in their deliverance from the effete tyranny of the Church and its Government. I have been fortunate enough to anticipate the arrival of your vessel, as you were fortunate enough to anticipate the arrival of my messenger. I am doubly fortunate, as it gives me the pleasure of your company this evening, and necessitates no further trouble than the return of the boat for the other gentleman — which has already gone. Doubtless you may know him."

"I must warn you again, Señor Perkins," said Hurlstone sternly, "that I have no connection with any political party; nor have I any sympathy with your purpose against the constituted authorities."

"I am willing to believe that you have no political affinities at all, my dear Mr. Hurlstone," returned Perkins, with unruffled composure, "and, consequently, we will not argue as to what is the constituted authority of Todos Santos. Perhaps to-morrow it may be on board *this ship*, and I may still have the pleasure of making you at home here!"

"Until then," said Hurlstone dryly, "at least you will allow me to repair my error by returning to the shore."

"For the moment I hardly think it would be wise," replied Perkins gently. "Allowing that you escaped the vigilance of my friends on the shore, whose suspicions you have aroused, and who might do you some injury, you would feel it your duty to inform those who sent you of the presence of my ship, and thus precipitate

a collision between my friends and yours, which would be promotive of ill-feeling, and perhaps bloodshed. You know my peaceful disposition, Mr. Hurlstone; you can hardly expect me to countenance an act of folly that would be in violation of it."

"In other words, having decoyed me here on board your ship, you intend to detain me," said Hurlstone insultingly.

"'Decoy,' " said Perkins, in gentle deprecation, "'decoy' is hardly the word I expected from a gentleman who has been so unfortunate as to take, unsolicited and of his own free will, another person's place in a boat. But," he continued, assuming an easy argumentative attitude, "let us look at it from your view-point. Let us imagine that *your* ship had anticipated mine, and that *my* messenger had unwittingly gone on board of *her*. What do you think they would have done to him?"

"They would have hung him at the yard-arm, as he deserved," said Hurlstone unflinchingly.

"You are wrong," said Perkins gently. "They would have given him the alternative of betraying his trust, and confessing everything — which he would probably have accepted. Pardon me! — this is no insinuation against you," he interrupted, — "but I regret to say that my experience with the effete Latin races of this continent has not inspired me with confidence in their loyalty to trust. Let me give you an instance," he continued, smiling: "the ship you are expecting is supposed to be an inviolable secret of the Church, but it is known to me — to my friends ashore — and even to you, my poor friend, a heretic! More than that, I am told that the Comandante, the Padre, and Alcalde are actually arranging to deport some of the American women by this vessel, which has been hitherto sacred to the emissaries of the Church alone. But you probably know this — it is doubtless

part of your errand. I only mention it to convince you that I have certainly no need either to know your secrets, to hang you from the yard-arm if you refused to give them up, or to hold you as hostage for my messenger, who, as I have shown you, can take care of himself. I shall not ask you for that secret despatch you undoubtedly carry next your heart, because I don't want it. You are at liberty to keep it until you can deliver it, or drop it out of that port-hole into the sea — as you choose. But I hear the boat returning," continued Perkins, rising gently from his seat as the sound of oars came faintly alongside, "and no doubt with Winslow's messenger. I am sorry you won't let me bring you together. I dare say he knows all about you, and it really need not alter your opinions."

"One moment," said Hurlstone, stunned, yet incredulous of Perkins's revelations. "You said that both the Comandante and Alcalde had arranged to send away certain ladies — are you not mistaken?"

"I think not," said Perkins quietly, looking over a pile of papers on the table before him. "Yes, here it is," he continued, reading from a memorandum: "'Don Ramon Ramirez arranged with Pepe for the secret carrying off of Doña Barbara Brimmer.' Why, that was six weeks ago, and here we have the Comandante suborning one Marcia, a dragoon, to abduct Mrs. Markham — by Jove, my old friend! — and Doña Leonor — our beauty, was she not? Yes, here it is: in black and white. Read it, if you like, — and pardon me for one moment, while I receive this unlucky messenger."

Left to himself, Hurlstone barely glanced at the memorandum, which seemed to be the rough minutes of some society. He believed Perkins; but was it possible that the Padre could be ignorant of the designs of his fellow-councilors? And if he were not — if he had long before

been in complicity with them for the removal of Eleanor, might he not also have duped him, Hurlstone, and sent him on this mission as a mere blind ; and — more infamously — perhaps even thus decoyed him on board the wrong ship ? No — it was impossible ! His honest blood quickly flew to his cheek at that momentary disloyal suspicion.

Nevertheless, the Señor's bland revelations filled him with vague uneasiness. *She* was safe with her brother now ; but what if he and the other Americans were engaged in this ridiculous conspiracy, this pot-house rebellion that Father Esteban had spoken of, and which he had always treated with such contempt ? It seemed strange that Perkins had said nothing of the arrival of the relieving party from the Gulf, and its probable effect on the malcontents. Did he know it ? or was the news now being brought by this messenger whom he, Hurlstone, had supplanted ? If so, when and how had Perkins received the intelligence that brought him to Todos Santos ? The young man could scarcely repress a bitter smile as he remembered the accepted idea of Todos Santos' inviolability — that inaccessible port that had within six weeks secretly summoned Perkins to its assistance ! And it was there he believed himself secure ! What security had he at all ? Might not this strange, unimpassioned, omniscient man already know *his* secret as he had known the others' ?

The interview of Perkins with the messenger in the next cabin was a long one, and apparently a stormy one on the part of the newcomer. Hurlstone could hear his excited foreign voice, shrill with the small vehemence of a shallow character ; but there was no change in the slow, measured tones of the Señor. He listlessly began to turn over the papers on the table. Presently he paused. He had taken up a sheet of paper on which

Señor Perkins had evidently been essaying some composition in verse. It seemed to have been of a lugubrious character. The titular line at the top of the page, "Dirge," had been crossed out for the substituted "In Memoriam." He read carelessly :

"O Muse unmet — but not unwept —
I seek thy sacred haunt in vain.
Too late, alas ! the tryst is kept —
We may not meet again !

"I sought thee 'midst the orange bloom,
To find that thou hadst grasped the palm
Of martyr, and the silent tomb
Had hid thee in its calm.

"By fever racked, thou languishest
On Nicaragua's " —

Hurlstone threw the paper aside. Although he had not forgotten the Señor's reputation for sentimental extravagance, and on another occasion might have laughed at it, there was something so monstrous in this hysterical, morbid composition of the man who was even then contemplating bloodshed and crime, that he was disgusted. Like most sentimental egotists, Hurlstone was exceedingly intolerant of that quality in others, and he turned for relief to his own thoughts of Eleanor Keene and his own unfortunate passion. *He* could not have written poetry at such a moment !

But the cabin-door opened, and Señor Perkins appeared. Whatever might have been the excited condition of his unknown visitor, the Señor's round, clean-shaven face was smiling and undisturbed by emotion. As his eye fell on the page of manuscript Hurlstone had just cast down, a slight shadow crossed his beneficent expanse of forehead, and deepened in his soft dark eyes ; but the next moment it was chased away by his quick-

recurring smile. Even thus transient and superficial was his feeling, thought Hurlstone.

"I have some news for you," said Perkins affably, "which may alter your decision about returning. My friends ashore," he continued, "judging from the ingenuous specimen which has just visited me, are more remarkable for their temporary zeal and spasmodic devotion than for prudent reserve or lasting discretion. They have submitted a list to me of those whom they consider dangerous to Mexican liberty, and whom they are desirous of hanging. I regret to say that the list is illogical, and the request inopportune. Our friend Mr. Banks is put down as an ally of the Government and an objectionable business rival of that eminent patriot and well-known drover, Señor Martinez, who just called upon me. Mr. Crosby's humor is considered subversive of a proper respect for all patriotism; but I cannot understand why they have added *your* name as especially 'dangerous.'"

Hurlstone made a gesture of contempt.

"I suppose they pay me the respect of considering me a friend of the old priest. So be it! I hope they will let the responsibility fall on me alone."

"The Padre is already proscribed as one of the Council," said Señor Perkins quietly.

"Do you mean to say," said Hurlstone impetuously, "that you will permit a hair of that innocent old man's head to be harmed by those wretches?"

"You are generous but hasty, my friend," said Señor Perkins, in gentle deprecation. "Allow me to put your question in another way. Ask me if I intend to perpetuate the Catholic Church in Todos Santos by adding another martyr to its roll, and I will tell you—No! I need not say that I am equally opposed to any proceedings against Banks, Crosby, and yourself, for diplomatic

reasons, apart from the kindly memories of our old associations on this ship. I have therefore been obliged to return to the excellent Martinez his little list, with the remark that I should hold *him* personally responsible if any of you are molested. There is, however, no danger. Messrs. Banks and Crosby are with the other Americans, whom we have guaranteed to protect, at the Mission, in the care of your friend the Padre. You are surprised! Equally so was the Padre. Had you delayed your departure an hour you would have met them, and I should have been debarred the pleasure of your company.

"By to-morrow," continued Perkins, placing the tips of his fingers together reflectively, "the Government of Todos Santos will have changed hands, and without bloodshed. You look incredulous! My dear young friend, it has been a part of my professional pride to show the world that these revolutions can be accomplished as peacefully as our own changes of administration. But for a few infelicitous accidents, this would have been the case of the late liberation of Quinquinambo. The only risk run is to myself — the leader, and that is as it should be. But all this personal explanation is, doubtless, uninteresting to you, my young friend. I meant only to say that, if you prefer not to remain here, you can accompany me when I leave the ship at nine o'clock with a small reconnoitring party, and I will give you safe escort back to your friends at the Mission."

This amicable proposition produced a sudden revulsion of feeling in Hurlstone. To return to those people from whom he was fleeing, in what was scarcely yet a serious emergency, was not to be thought of! Yet, where could he go? How could he be near enough to assist *her* without again openly casting his lot among them? And would they not consider his return an act of cowardice? He could not restrain a gesture of irritation as he rose impatiently to his feet.

"You are agitated, my dear fellow. It is not unworthy of your youth ; but, believe me, it is unnecessary," said Perkins, in his most soothing manner. "Sit down. You have an hour yet to make your decision. If you prefer to remain, you will accompany the ship to Todos Santos and join me."

"I don't comprehend you," interrupted Hurlstone suspiciously.

"I forgot," said Perkins, with a bland smile, "that you are unaware of our plan of campaign. After communicating with the insurgents, I land here with a small force to assist them. I do this to anticipate any action and prevent the interference of the Mexican coaster, now due, which always touches here through ignorance of the channel leading to the Bay of Todos Santos and the Presidio. I then send the *Excelsior*, that does know the channel, to Todos Santos, to appear before the Presidio, take the enemy in flank, and coöperate with us. The arrival of the *Excelsior* there is the last move of this little game, if I may so call it: it is 'checkmate to the King,' the clerical Government of Todos Santos."

A little impressed, in spite of himself, with the calm forethought and masterful security of the Señor, Hurlstone thanked him with a greater show of respect than he had hitherto evinced. The Señor looked gratified, but unfortunately placed that respect the next moment in peril.

"You were possibly glancing over these verses," he said, with a hesitating and almost awkward diffidence, indicating the manuscript Hurlstone had just thrown aside. "It is merely the first rough draft of a little tribute I had begun to a charming friend. I sometimes," he interpolated, with an apologetic smile, "trifle with the Muse. Perhaps I ought not to use the word 'trifle' in connection with a composition of a threnodial and dirge-

like character," he continued deprecatingly. "Certainly not in the presence of a gentleman as accomplished and educated as yourself, to whom recreation of this kind is undoubtedly familiar. My occupations have been, unfortunately, of a nature not favorable to the indulgence of verse. As a college man yourself, my dear sir, you will probably forgive the lucubrations of an old graduate of William and Mary's, who has forgotten his 'ars poetica.' The verses you have possibly glanced at are crude, I am aware, and perhaps show the difficulty of expressing at once the dictates of the heart and the brain. They refer to a dear friend now at peace. You have perhaps, in happier and more careless hours, heard me speak of Mrs. Euphemia M'Corkle, of Illinois?"

Hurlstone remembered indistinctly to have heard, even in his reserved exclusiveness on the Excelsior, the current badinage of the passengers concerning Señor Perkins' extravagant adulation of this unknown poetess. As a part of the staple monotonous humor of the voyage, it had only disgusted him. With a feeling that he was unconsciously sharing the burlesque relief of the passengers, he said, with a polite attempt at interest, —

"Then the lady is — no more?"

"If that term can be applied to one whose work is immortal," corrected Señor Perkins gently. "All that was finite of this gifted woman was lately forwarded by Adams's Express Company from San Juan, to receive sepulture among her kindred at Keokuk, Iowa."

"Did she say she was from that place?" asked Hurlstone, with half automatic interest.

"The Consul says she gave that request to the priest."

"Then you were not with her when she died?" said Hurlstone absently.

"I was *never* with her, neither then nor before," returned Señor Perkins gravely. Seeing Hurlstone's mo-

mentary surprise, he went on, "The late Mrs. M'Corkle and I never met — we were personally unknown to each other. You may have observed the epithet 'unmet' in the first line of the first stanza; you will then understand that the privation of actual contact with this magnetic soul would naturally impart more difficulty into elegiac expression."

"Then you never really saw the lady you admire?" said Hurlstone vacantly.

"Never. The story is a romantic one," said Perkins, with a smile that was half complacent and yet half embarrassed. "May I tell it to you? Thanks. Some three years ago I contributed some verses to the columns of a Western paper edited by a friend of mine. The subject chosen was my favorite one, 'The Liberation of Mankind,' in which I may possibly have expressed myself with some poetic fervor on a theme so dear to my heart. I may remark without vanity, that it received high encomiums — perhaps at some more opportune moment you may be induced to cast your eyes over a copy I still retain — but no praise touched me as deeply as a tribute in verse in another journal from a gifted unknown, who signed herself 'Euphemia.' The subject of the poem, which was dedicated to myself, was on the liberation of women — from — er — I may say certain domestic shackles; treated perhaps vaguely, but with grace and vigor. I replied a week later in a larger poem, recording more fully my theories and aspirations regarding a struggling Central American confederacy, addressed to 'Euphemia.' She rejoined with equal elaboration and detail, referring to a more definite form of tyranny in the relations of marriage, and alluding with some feeling to uncongenial experiences of her own. An instinct of natural delicacy, veiled under the hyperbole of 'want of space,' prevented my editorial friend from encouraging the repetition of this

charming interchange of thought and feeling. But I procured the fair stranger's address; we began a correspondence, at once imaginative and sympathetic in expression, if not always poetical in form. I was called to South America by the Macedonian cry of 'Quinquinambo!' I still corresponded with her. When I returned to Quinquinambo I received letters from her, dated from San Francisco. I feel that my words could only fail, my dear Hurlstone, to convey to you the strength and support I derived from those impassioned breathings of aid and sympathy at that time. Enough for me to confess that it was mainly due to the deep womanly interest that *she* took in the fortunes of the passengers of the *Excelsior* that I gave the Mexican authorities early notice of their whereabouts. But, pardon me," — he stopped hesitatingly, with a slight flush, as he noticed the utterly inattentive face and attitude of Hurlstone, — "I am boring you. I am forgetting that this is only important to myself," he added, with a sigh. "I only intended to ask your advice in regard to the disposition of certain manuscripts and effects of hers, which are unconnected with our acquaintance. I thought, perhaps, I might entrust them to your delicacy and consideration. They are here, if you choose to look them over; and here is also what I believe to be a daguerreotype of the lady herself, but in which I fail to recognize her soul and genius."

He laid a bundle of letters and a morocco case on the table with a carelessness that was intended to hide a slight shade of disappointment in his face — and rose.

"I beg your pardon," said Hurlstone, in confused and remorseful apology; "but I frankly confess that my thoughts *were* preoccupied. Pray forgive me. If you will leave these papers with me, I promise to devote myself to them another time."

"As you please," said the Señor, with a slight return

of his old affability. "But don't bore yourself now. Let us go on deck."

He passed out of the cabin as Hurlstone glanced, half mechanically, at the package before him. Suddenly his cheek reddened; he stopped, looked hurriedly at the retreating form of Perkins, and picked up a manuscript from the packet. It was in his wife's handwriting. A sudden idea flashed across his mind, and seemed to illuminate the obscure monotony of the story he had just heard. He turned hurriedly to the morocco case, and opened it with trembling fingers. It was a daguerreo-type, faded and silvered; but the features were those of his wife!

CHAPTER VIII.

HOSTAGE.

THE revolution of Todos Santos had to all appearances been effected as peacefully as the gentle Liberator of Quinquinambo could have wished. Two pronunciamientos, rudely printed and posted in the Plaza, and saluted by the fickle garrison of one hundred men, who had, however, immediately reappointed their old commander as Generalissimo under the new régime, seemed to leave nothing to be desired. A surging mob of vacant and wondering peons, bearing a singular resemblance to the wild cattle and horses which intermingled with them in blind and unceasing movement across the Plaza and up the hilly street, and seemingly as incapable of self-government, were alternately dispersed and stampeded or allowed to gather again as occasion required. Some of these heterogeneous bands were afterwards found — the revolution accomplished — gazing stupidly on the sea, or ruminating in bovine wantonness on the glacis before the Presidio.

Eleanor Keene, who with her countrywomen had been hurried to the refuge of the Mission, was more disturbed and excited at the prospect of meeting Hurlstone again than by any terror of the insurrection. But Hurlstone was not there, and Father Esteban received her with a coldness she could not attribute entirely to her countrymen's supposed sympathy with the insurgents. When Richard Keene, who would not leave his sister until he had seen her safe under the Mission walls, ventured at her suggestion to ask after the American recluse, Father Esteban

replied dryly that, being a Christian gentleman, Hurlstone was the only one who had the boldness to seek out the American filibuster Perkins, on his own ship, and remonstrate with him for his unholy crusade. For the old priest had already become aware of Hurlstone's blunder, and he hated Eleanor as the primary cause of the trouble. But for her, Diego would be still with him in this emergency.

"Never mind, Nell," said Dick, noticing the disappointed eyes of his sister as they parted, "you'll all be safe here until we return. Between you and me, Banks, Brimmer, and I think that Brace and Winslow have gone too far in this matter, and we're going to stop it, unless the whole thing is over now, as they say."

"Don't believe that," said Crosby. "It's like their infernal earthquakes; there's always a second shock, and a tidal wave to follow. I pity Brace, Winslow, and Perkins if they get caught in it."

There seemed to be some reason for his skepticism, for later the calm of the Mission Garden was broken upon by the monotonous tread of banded men on the shell-strewn walks, and the door of the refectory opened to the figure of Señor Perkins. A green silk sash across his breast, a gold-laced belt, supporting a light dress-sword and a pair of pistols, buckled around the jaunty waist of his ordinary black frock-coat, were his scant martial suggestions. But his hat, albeit exchanged for a soft felt one, still reposed on the back of his benevolent head, and seemed to accent more than ever the contrast between his peaceful shoulders and the military smartness of his lower figure. He bowed with easy politeness to the assembled fugitives; but before he could address them, Father Esteban had risen to his feet, —

"I thought that this house, at least, was free from the desecrating footsteps of lawlessness and impiety," said the priest sternly. "How dare *you* enter here?"

"Nothing but the desire to lend my assistance to the claims of beauty, innocence, helplessness, and — if you will allow me to add," with a low bow to the priest — "sanctity, caused this intrusion. For I regret to say that, through the ill-advised counsels of some of my fellow-patriots, the Indian tribes attached to this Mission are in revolt, and threaten even this sacred building."

"It is false!" said Father Esteban indignantly. "Even under the accursed manipulation of your emissaries, the miserable heathen would not dare to raise a parricidal hand against the Church that fostered him!"

Señor Perkins smiled gently, but sadly.

"Your belief, reverend sir, does you infinite credit. But, to save time, let me give way to a gentleman who, I believe, possesses your confidence. He will confirm my statement."

He drew aside, and allowed Hurlstone, who had been standing unperceived behind, to step forward. The Padre uttered an exclamation of pleasure. Miss Keene colored quickly. Hurlstone cast a long and lingering glance at her, which seemed to the embarrassed girl full of a new, strange meaning, and then advanced quickly with outstretched hands towards Father Esteban.

"He speaks truly," he said, hurriedly, "and in the interests of humanity alone. The Indians have been tampered with treacherously, against his knowledge and consent. He only seeks now to prevent the consequences of this folly by placing you and these ladies out of reach of harm aboard of the *Excelsior*."

"A very proper and excellent idea," broke in Mrs. Brimmer, with genteel precision. "You see these people evidently recognize the fact of Mr. Brimmer's previous ownership of the *Excelsior*, and the respect that is due to him. I, for one, shall accept the offer, and insist upon Miss Chubb accompanying me."

"I shall be charmed to extend the hospitality of the *Excelsior* to you on any pretext," said the Señor gallantly, "and, indeed, should insist upon personally accompanying you and my dear friends Mrs. Markham and Miss Keene ; but, alas ! I am required elsewhere. I leave," he continued, turning towards Hurlstone, who was already absorbed in a whispered consultation with Padre Esteban — "I leave a sufficient escort with you to protect your party to the boats which have brought us here. You will take them to the *Excelsior*, and join me with the ship off *Todos Santos* in the morning. Adieu, my friends ! Good-night, and farewell !"

The priest made a vehement movement of protestation, but he was checked by Hurlstone, as, with a low bow, Señor Perkins passed out into the darkness. The next moment his voice was heard raised in command, and the measured tramp of his men gradually receded and was lost in the distance.

"Does he think," said the priest indignantly, "that I, Padre Esteban, would desert my sacred trust, and leave His Holy Temple a prey to sacrilegious trespass ? Never, while I live, Diego ! Call him back and tell him so !"

"Rather listen to me, Father Esteban," said the young man earnestly. "I have a plan by which this may be avoided. From my knowledge of these Indians, I am convinced that they have been basely tricked and cajoled by some one. I believe that they are still amenable to reason and argument, and I am so certain that I am ready to go down among them and make the attempt. The old Chief and part of his band are still encamped on the shore ; we could hear them as we passed in the boats. I will go and meet them. If I succeed in bringing them to reason I will return ; if I find them intractable, I will at least divert their attention from the Mission

long enough for you to embark these ladies with their escort, which you will do at the end of two hours if I do not return."

"In two hours?" broke in Mrs. Brimmer, in sharp protest. "I positively object. I certainly understood that Señor Perkins' invitation, which, under the circumstances, I shall consider equal to a command from Mr. Brimmer, was to be accepted at once and without delay; and I certainly shall not leave Miss Chubb exposed to imminent danger for two hours to meet the caprice of an entire stranger to Mr. Brimmer."

"I am willing to stay with Father Esteban, if he will let me," said Eleanor Keene quietly, "for I have faith in Mr. Hurlstone's influence and courage, and believe he will be successful."

The young man thanked her with another demonstrative look that brought the warm blood to her cheek.

"Well," said Mrs. Markham promptly; "I suppose if Nell stays I must see the thing through and stay with her—even if I have n't orders from Jimmy."

"There is no necessity that either Mr. or Mrs. Brimmer should be disobeyed in their wishes," said Hurlstone grimly. "Luckily there are two boats; Mrs. Brimmer and Miss Chubb can take one of them with half the escort, and proceed at once to the Excelsior. I will ride with them as far as the boat. And now," he continued, turning to the old priest, with sparkling eyes, "I have only to ask your blessing, and the good wishes of these ladies, to go forth on my mission of peace. If I am successful," he added, with a light laugh, "confess that a layman and a heretic may do some service for the Church." As the old man laid his half detaining, half benedictory hands upon his shoulders, the young man seized the opportunity to whisper in his ear, "Remember your promise to tell her *all* I have told you," and, with an-

other glance at Miss Keene, he marshalled Mrs. Brimmer and Miss Chubb before him, and hurried them to the boat.

Miss Keene looked after him with a vague felicity in the change that seemed to have come on him, a change that she could as little account for as her own happiness. Was it the excitement of danger that had overcome his reserve, and set free his compressed will and energy? She longed for her brother to see him thus — alert, strong, and chivalrous. In her girlish faith, she had no fear for his safety; he would conquer, he would succeed; he would come back to them victorious! Looking up from her happy abstraction, at the side of Mrs. Markham, who had calmly gone to sleep in an arm-chair, she saw Father Esteban's eyes fixed upon her. With a warning gesture of the hand towards Mrs. Markham, he rose, and, going to the door of the sacristy, beckoned to her. The young girl noiselessly crossed the room and followed him into the sanctuary.

Half an hour later, and while Mrs. Markham was still asleep, Father Esteban appeared at the door of the sacristy ostentatiously taking snuff, and using a large red handkerchief to wipe his more than usually humid eyes. Eleanor Keene, with her chin resting on her hand, remained sitting as he had left her, with her abstracted eyes fixed vacantly on the lamp before the statue of the Virgin and the half-lit gloom of the nave.

Padre Esteban had told her *all*! She now knew Hurlstone's history even as he had hesitatingly imparted it to the old priest in this very church — perhaps upon the very seat where she sat. She knew the peace that he had sought for and found within these walls, broken only by his passion for her! She knew his struggles against the hopelessness of this new-born love, even the desperate remedy that had been adopted against herself, and the

later voluntary exile of her lover. She knew the providential culmination of his trouble in the news brought unconsciously by Perkins, which, but a few hours ago, he had verified by the letters, records, and even the certificate of death that had thus strangely been placed in his hands! She knew all this so clearly now, that, with the instinct of a sympathetic nature, she even fancied she had heard it before. She knew that all the obstacles to an exchange of their affection had been removed; that her lover only waited his opportunity to hear from her own lips the answer that was even now struggling at her heart. And yet she hesitated and drew back, half frightened in the presence of her great happiness. How she longed, and yet dreaded, to meet him! What if anything should have happened to him?—what if he should be the victim of some treachery?—what if he did not come?—what if?—“Good heavens! what was that?”

She was near the door of the sacristy, gazing into the dim and shadowy church. Either she was going mad, or else the grotesque Indian hangings of the walls were certainly moving towards her. She rose in speechless terror, as what she had taken for an uncouthly swathed and draped barbaric pillar suddenly glided to the window. Crouching against the wall, she crept breathlessly towards the entrance to the garden. Casting a hurried glance above her, she saw the open belfry that was illuminated by the misty radiance of the moon, darkly shadowed by hideously gibbering faces that peered at her through the broken tracery. With a cry of horror she threw open the garden-door; but the next moment was swallowed up in the tumultuous tide of wild and half naked Indians who surged against the walls of the church, and felt herself lifted from her feet, with inarticulate cries, and borne along the garden. Even in her mortal terror, she could recognize that the cries were not those of rage, but of

vacant satisfaction ; that although she was lifted on lithe shoulders, the grasp of her limbs was gentle, and the few dark faces she could see around her were glistening in childlike curiosity. Presently she felt herself placed upon the back of a mule, that seemed to be swayed hither and thither in the shifting mass, and the next moment the misty, tossing cortége moved forward with a new and more definite purpose. She called aloud for Father Esteban and Mrs. Markham ; her voice appeared to flow back upon her from the luminous wall of fog that closed around her. Then the inarticulate, irregular outcries took upon themselves a measured rhythm, the movement of the mass formed itself upon the monotonous chant, the intervals grew shorter, the mule broke into a trot, and then the whole vast multitude fell into a weird, rhythmical, jogging quick step at her side.

Whatever was the intent of this invasion of the Mission and her own strange abduction, she was relieved by noticing that they were going in the same direction as that taken by Hurlstone an hour before. Either he was cognizant of their movements, and, being powerless to prevent their attack on the church, had stipulated they were to bring her to him in safety, or else he was calculating to intercept them on the way. The fog prevented her from forming any estimation of the numbers that surrounded her, or if the Padre and Mrs. Markham were possibly preceding her as captives in the vanguard. She felt the breath of the sea, and knew they were traveling along the shore ; the monotonous chant and jogging motion gradually dulled her active terror to an apathetic resignation, in which occasionally her senses seemed to swoon and swim in the dreamy radiance through which they passed ; at times it seemed a dream or nightmare with which she was hopelessly struggling ; at times she was taking part in an unhallowed pageant, or some hea-

then sacrificial procession of which she was the destined victim.

She had no consciousness of how long the hideous journey lasted. Her benumbed senses were suddenly awakened by a shock ; the chant had ceased, the moving mass in which she was imbedded rolled forward once more as if by its own elasticity, and then receded again with a jar that almost unseated her. Then the inarticulate murmur was overborne by a voice. It was *his* ! She turned blindly towards it ; but before she could utter the cry that rose to her lips, she was again lifted from the saddle, carried forward, and gently placed upon what seemed to be a moss-grown bank. Opening her half swimming eyes she recognized the Indian cross. The crowd seemed to recede before her. Her eyes closed again as a strong arm passed around her waist.

"Speak to me, Miss Keene — Eleanor — my darling !" said Hurlstone's voice. "O my God ! they have killed her !"

With an effort she moved her head and tried to smile. Their eyes, and then their lips met ; she fainted.

When she struggled to her senses again, she was lying in the stern-sheets of the Excelsior's boat, supported on Mrs. Markham's shoulder. For an instant the floating veil of fog around her, and the rhythmical movement of the boat, seemed a part of her mysterious ride, and she raised her head with a faint cry for Hurlstone.

"It's all right, my dear," said Mrs. Markham, soothingly ; "he's ashore with the Padre, and everything else is all right too. But it's rather ridiculous to think that those idiotic Indians believed the only way they could show Mr. Hurlstone that they meant us no harm was to drag us all up to *their* Mission, as they call that half heathen cross of theirs — for safety against — who do you think, dear? — the dreadful *Americans* ! And imagine all the

while the Padre and I were just behind you, bringing up the rear of the procession — only they would n't let us join you because they wanted to show you special honor as " — she sank her voice to a whisper in Eleanor's ear — "as the future Mrs. Hurlstone! It appears they must have noticed something about you two, the last time you were there, my dear. And — to think — *you* never told me anything about it!"

When they reached the *Excelsior*, they found that Mrs. Brimmer, having already settled herself in the best cabin, was inclined to extend the hospitalities of the ship with the air of a hostess. But the arrival of Hurlstone at midnight with some delegated authority from Señor Perkins, and the unexpected getting under way of the ship, disturbed her complacency.

"We are going through the channel into the bay of Todos Santos," was the brief reply vouchsafed her by Hurlstone.

"But why can't we remain here and wait for Mr. Brimmer?" she asked indignantly.

"Because," responded Hurlstone grimly, "the *Excelsior* is expected off the Presidio to-morrow morning to aid the insurgents."

"You don't mean to say that Miss Chubb and myself are to be put in the attitude of arraying ourselves against the constituted authorities — and, perhaps, Mr. Brimmer himself?" asked Mrs. Brimmer, in genuine alarm.

"It looks so," said Hurlstone, a little maliciously; "but, no doubt, your husband and the Señor will arrange it amicably."

To Mrs. Markham and Miss Keene he explained more satisfactorily that the unexpected disaffection of the Indians had obliged Perkins to so far change his plans as to disembark his entire force from the *Excelsior*, and leave her with only the complement of men necessary to

navigate her through the channel of Todos Santos, where she would peacefully await his orders, or receive his men in case of defeat.

Nevertheless, as the night was nearly spent, Mrs. Markham and Eleanor preferred to await the coming day on deck, and watch the progress of the *Excelsior* through the mysterious channel. In a few moments the barque began to feel the combined influence of the tide and the slight morning breeze, and, after rounding an invisible point, she presently rose and fell on the larger ocean swell. The pilot, whom Hurlstone recognized as the former third mate of the *Excelsior*, appeared to understand the passage perfectly; and even Hurlstone and the ladies, who had through eight months' experience become accustomed to the luminous obscurity of Todos Santos, could detect the faint looming of the headland at the entrance. The same soothing silence, even the same lulling of the unseen surf, which broke in gentle undulations over the bar, and seemed to lift the barque in rocking buoyancy over the slight obstruction, came back to them as on the day of their fateful advent. The low orders of the pilot, the cry of the leadsman in the chains, were but a part of the restful past.

Under the combined influence of the hour and the climate, the conversation fell into monosyllables, and Mrs. Markham dozed. The lovers sat silently together, but the memory of a kiss was between them. It spanned the gulf of the past with an airy bridge, over which their secret thoughts and fancies passed and repassed with a delicious security; henceforth they could not flee from that memory, even if they wished; they read it in each other's lightest glance; they felt it in the passing touch of each other's hands; it lingered, with vague tenderness, on the most trivial interchange of thought. Yet they spoke a little of the future. Eleanor believed that

her brother would not object to their union ; he had spoken of entering into business at Todos Santos, and perhaps when peace and security were restored they might live together. Hurlstone did not tell her that a brief examination of his wife's papers had shown him that the property he had set aside for her maintenance, and from which she had regularly drawn an income, had increased in value, and left him a rich man. He only pressed her hand, and whispered that her wishes should be his. They had become tenderly silent again, as the *Excelsior*, now fairly in the bay, appeared to be slowly drifting, with listless sails and idle helm, in languid search of an anchorage. Suddenly they were startled by a cry from the lookout.

"Sail ho !"

There was an incredulous start on the deck. The mate sprang into the fore-rigging with an oath of protestation. But at the same moment the tall masts and spars of a vessel suddenly rose like a phantom out of the fog at their side. The half disciplined foreign crew uttered a cry of rage and trepidation, and huddled like sheep in the waist, with distracted gestures ; even the two men at the wheel forsook their post to run in dazed terror to the taffrail. Before the mate could restore order to this chaos, the *Excelsior* had drifted, with a scarcely perceptible concussion, against the counter of the strange vessel. In an instant a dozen figures appeared on its bulwarks, and dropped unimpeded upon the *Excelsior's* deck. As the foremost one approached the mate, the latter shrank back in consternation.

"Captain Bunker !"

"Yes," said the figure, advancing with a mocking laugh ; "Captain Bunker it is. Captain Bunker, formerly of this American barque *Excelsior*, and now of the Mexican ship *La Trinidad*. Captain Bunker ez larnt every

foot of that passage in an open boat last August, and did n't forget it yesterday in a big ship! Captain Bunker ez has just landed a company of dragoons to relieve the Presidio. What d' ye say to that, Mr. M'Carthy — eh?"

"I say," answered M'Carthy, raising his voice with a desperate effort to recover his calmness, "I say that Perkins landed with double that number of men yesterday around that point, and that he'll be aboard here in half an hour to make you answer for this insult to his ship and his Government."

"His Government!" echoed Bunker, with a hoarser laugh; "hear him! — *his* Government! His Government died at four o'clock this morning, when his own ringleaders gave him up to the authorities. Ha! Why, this yer revolution is played out, old man; and Generalissimo Leonidas Perkins is locked up in the Presidio."

CHAPTER IX.

LIBERATED.

THE revolution was, indeed, ended. The unexpected arrival of a relieving garrison in the bay of Todos Santos had completed what the dissensions in the insurgents' councils had begun ; the discontents, led by Brace and Winslow, had united with the Government against Perkins and his aliens ; but a compromise had been effected by the treacherous giving up of the Liberator himself in return for an amnesty granted to his followers. The part that Bunker had played in bringing about this moral catastrophe was, however, purely adventitious. When he had recovered his health, and subsequent events had corroborated the truth of his story, the Mexican Government, who had compromised with Quinquinambo, was obliged to recognize his claims by offering him command of the missionary ship, and permission to rediscover the channel, the secret of which had been lost for half a century to the Government. He had arrived at the crucial moment when Perkins' command were scattered along the seashore, and the dragoons had invested Todos Santos without opposition.

Such was the story substantially told to Hurlstone and confirmed on his debarkation with the ladies at Todos Santos, the Excelsior being now in the hands of the authorities. Hurlstone did not hesitate to express to Padre Esteban his disgust at the treachery which had made a scapegoat of Señor Perkins. But to his surprise the cautious priest only shrugged his shoulders as he took a complacent pinch of snuff.

"Have a care, Diego! You are of necessity grateful to this man for the news he has brought — nay, more, for possibly being the instrument elected by Providence to precipitate the dénouement of that miserable woman's life — but let it not close your eyes to his infamous political career. I admit that he was opposed to the revolt of the heathen against us, but it was his emissaries and his doctrines that poisoned with heresy the fountains from which they drank. Enough! Be grateful! but do not expect *me* to intercede for Baal and Ashtaroth!"

"Intercede!" echoed Hurlstone, alarmed at the sudden sacerdotal hardness that had overspread the old priest's face. "Surely the Council will not be severe with the man who was betrayed into their power by others equally guilty?"

Padre Esteban avoided Hurlstone's eyes as he answered with affected coolness, — "*Quien sabe?* There will be *expulsados*, no doubt. The Excelsior, which is confiscated, will be sent to Mexico with them."

"I must see Señor Perkins," said Hurlstone suddenly.

The priest hesitated.

"When?" he asked cautiously.

"At once."

"Good." He wrote a hurried line on a piece of paper, folded it, sealed it, and gave it to Hurlstone. "You will hand that to the Comandante. He will give you access to the prisoner."

In less than half an hour Hurlstone presented himself before the Commander. The events of the last twenty-four hours had evidently affected Don Miguel, for although he received Hurlstone courteously, there was a singular reflection of the priest's harshness in his face as he glanced over the missive. He took out his watch.

"I give you ten minutes with the prisoner, Don Diego. More, I cannot."

A little awed by the manner of the Commander, Hurlstone bowed and followed him across the courtyard. It was filled with soldiers, and near the gateway a double file of dragoons, with loaded carbines, were standing at ease. Two sentries were ranged on each side of an open door which gave upon the courtyard. The Commander paused before it, and with a gesture invited him to enter. It was a large square apartment, lighted only by the open door and a grated enclosure above it. Seated in his shirt-sleeves, before a rude table, Señor Perkins was quietly writing. The shadow of Hurlstone's figure falling across his paper caused him to look up.

Whatever anxiety Hurlstone had begun to feel, it was quickly dissipated by the hearty, affable, and even happy greeting of the prisoner.

"Ah! what! my young friend Hurlstone! Again an unexpected pleasure," he said, extending his white hands. "And again you find me wooing the Muse, in, I fear, hesitating numbers." He pointed to the sheet of paper before him, which showed some attempts at versification. "But I confess to a singular fascination in the exercise of poetic composition, in instants of leisure like this — a fascination which, as a man of imagination yourself, you can appreciate."

"And I am sorry to find you here, Señor Perkins," began Hurlstone frankly; "but I believe it will not be for long."

"My opinion," said the Señor, with a glance of gentle contemplation at the distant Comandante, "as far as I may express it, coincides with your own."

"I have come," continued Hurlstone earnestly, "to offer you my services. I am ready," he raised his voice, with a view of being overheard, "to bear testimony that you had no complicity in the baser part of the late conspiracy, — the revolt of the savages, and that you did your

best to counteract the evil, although in doing so you have sacrificed yourself. I shall claim the right to speak from my own knowledge of the Indians and from their admission to me that they were led away by the vague representations of Martinez, Brace, and Winslow."

"Pardon — pardon me," said Señor Perkins deprecatingly, "you are mistaken. My general instructions, no doubt, justified these young gentlemen in taking, I shall not say extreme, but injudicious measures." He glanced meaningly in the direction of the Commander, as if to warn Hurlstone from continuing, and said gently, "But let us talk of something else. I thank you for your gracious intentions, but you remember that we agreed only yesterday that you knew nothing of politics, and did not concern yourself with them. I do not know but you are wise. Politics and the science of self-government, although dealing with general principles, are apt to be defined by the individual limitations of the enthusiast. What is good for *himself* he too often deems is applicable to the general public, instead of wisely understanding that what is good for *them* must be good for himself. But," said the Señor lightly, "we are again transgressing. We were to choose another topic. Let it be yourself, Mr. Hurlstone. You are looking well, sir; indeed, I may say I never saw you looking so well! Let me congratulate you. Health is the right of youth. May you keep both!"

He shook Hurlstone's hand again with singular fervor.

There was a slight bustle and commotion at the door of the guard-room, and the Commander's attention was called in that direction. Hurlstone profited by the opportunity to say in a hurried whisper:

"Tell me what I can do for you;" and he hesitated to voice his renewed uneasiness — "tell me — if — if — if — your case is — urgent!"

Señor Perkins lifted his shoulders and smiled with grateful benevolence.

"You have already promised me to deliver those papers and manuscripts of my deceased friend, and to endeavor to find her relations. I do not think it is urgent, however."

"I do not mean that," said Hurlstone eagerly. "I"—but Perkins stopped him with a sign that the Commander was returning.

Don Miguel approached them with disturbed and anxious looks.

"I have yielded to the persuasions of two ladies, Doña Leonor and the Señora Markham, to ask you to see them for a moment," he said to Señor Perkins. "Shall it be so? I have told them the hour is nearly spent."

"You have told them—*nothing more?*" asked the Señor, in a whisper unheard by Hurlstone.

"No."

"Let them come, then."

The Commander made a gesture to the sentries at the guard-room, who drew back to allow Mrs. Markham and Eleanor to pass. A little child, one of Eleanor's old Presidio pupils, who, recognizing her, had followed her into the guard-room, now emerged with her, and momentarily disconcerted at the presence of the Commander, ran, with the unerring instinct of childhood, to the Señor for protection. The filibuster smiled, and lifting the child with a paternal gesture to his shoulder by one hand, he extended the other to the ladies.

"The Commander," said Mrs. Markham briskly, "says it's against the rules; that visiting time is up; and you've already got a friend with you, and all that sort of thing; but I told him that I was bound to see you, if only to say that if there's any meanness going on, Susannah and James Markham ain't in it! No! But we're

going to see you put right and square in the matter ; and if we can't do it here, we'll do it, if we have to follow you to Mexico ! — that 's all !”

“ And I,” said Eleanor, grasping the Señor's hand, and half blushing as she glanced at Hurlstone, “ see that I have already a friend here who will help me to put in action all the sympathy I feel.”

Señor Perkins drew himself up, and cast a faint look of pride towards the Commander.

“ To *hear* such assurances from beautiful and eloquent lips like those before me,” he said, with his old oratorical wave of the hand, but a passing shadow across his mild eyes, “ is more than sufficient. In my experience of life I have been favored, at various emergencies, by the sympathy and outspoken counsel of your noble sex ; the last time by Mrs. Euphemia M'Corkle, of Peoria, Illinois, a lady of whom you have heard me speak — alas ! now lately deceased. A few lines at present lying on yonder table — a tribute to her genius — will be forwarded to you, dear Mrs. Markham. But let us change the theme. You are looking well — and you, too, Miss Keene. From the roses that bloom on your cheeks — nourished by the humid air of Todos Santos — I am gratified in thinking you have forgiven me your enforced detention here.”

At a gesture from the Commander he ceased, stepped back, bowed gravely, and the ladies recognized that their brief audience had terminated. As they passed through the gateway, looking back they saw Perkins still standing with the child on his shoulder and smiling affably upon them. Then the two massive doors of the gateway swung to with a crash, the bolts were shot, and the courtyard was impenetrable.

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A few moments later, the three friends had passed the outermost angle of the fortifications, and were descending

towards the beach. By the time they had reached the sands they had fallen into a vague silence.

A noise like the cracking and fall of some slight scaffolding behind them arrested their attention. Hurlstone turned quickly. A light smoke, drifting from the courtyard, was mingling with the fog. A faint cry of "Dios y Libertad!" rose with it.

With a hurried excuse to his companions, Hurlstone ran rapidly back, and reached the gate as it slowly rolled upon its hinges to a file of men that issued from the courtyard. The first object that met his eyes was the hat of Señor Perkins lying on the ground near the wall, with a terrible suggestion in its helpless and pathetic vacuity. A few paces further lay its late owner, with twenty Mexican bullets in his breast, his benevolent forehead bared meekly to the sky, as if even then mutely appealing to the higher judgment. He was dead! The soul of the Liberator of Quinquinambo, and of various other peoples more or less distressed and more or less ungrateful, was itself liberated!

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With the death of Señor Perkins ended the Crusade of the Excelsior. Under charge of Captain Bunker the vessel was sent to Mazatlan by the authorities, bearing the banished and proscribed Americans, Banks, Brace, Winslow, and Crosby; and, by permission of the Council, also their friends, Markham and Brimmer, and the ladies, Mrs. Brimmer, Chubb, and Markham. Hurlstone and Miss Keene alone were invited to remain, but, on later representations, the Council graciously included Richard Keene in the invitation, with the concession of the right to work the mines and control the ranches he and Hurlstone had purchased from their proscribed countrymen. The complacency of the Council of Todos Santos may be accounted for when it is understood that on the day the

firm of Hurlstone & Keene was really begun under the title of Mr. and Mrs. Hurlstone, Richard had prevailed upon the Alcalde to allow him to add the piquant Doña Isabel also to the firm under the title of Mrs. Keene. Although the port of Todos Santos was henceforth open to all commerce, the firm of Hurlstone & Keene long retained the monopoly of trade, and was a recognized power of intelligent civilization and honest progress on the Pacific coast. And none contributed more to that result than the clever and beautiful hostess of Excelsior Lodge, the charming country home of James Hurlstone, Esq., senior partner of the firm. Under the truly catholic shelter of its veranda Padre Esteban and the heretic stranger mingled harmoniously, and the dissensions of local and central Government were forgotten.

"I said that you were a *dama de grandeza*, you remember," said the youthful Mrs. Keene to Mrs. Hurlstone, "and, you see, you are!"

THE HERITAGE OF
DEDLOW MARSH
AND OTHER TALES

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THE HERITAGE OF DEDLOW MARSH.



I.

THE sun was going down on the Dedlow Marshes. The tide was following it fast as if to meet the reddening lines of sky and water in the west, leaving the foreground to grow blacker and blacker every moment, and to bring out in startling contrast the few half-filled and half-lit pools left behind and forgotten. The strong breath of the Pacific fanning their surfaces at times kindled them into a dull glow like dying embers. A cloud of sand-pipers rose white from one of the nearer lagoons, swept in a long eddying ring against the sunset, and became a black and dropping rain to seaward. The long sinuous line of channel, fading with the light and ebbing with the tide, began to give off here and there light puffs of gray-winged birds like sudden exhalations. High in the darkening sky the long arrow-headed lines

of geese and 'brant' pointed towards the upland. As the light grew more uncertain the air at times was filled with the rush of viewless and melancholy wings, or became plaintive with far-off cries and lamentations. As the Marshes grew blacker the far-scattered tussocks and accretions on its level surface began to loom in exaggerated outline, and two human figures, suddenly emerging erect on the bank of the hidden channel, assumed the proportion of giants.

When they had moored their unseen boat, they still appeared for some moments to be moving vaguely and aimlessly round the spot where they had disembarked. But as the eye became familiar with the darkness it was seen that they were really advancing inland, yet with a slowness of progression and deviousness of course that appeared inexplicable to the distant spectator. Presently it was evident that this seemingly even, vast, black expanse was traversed and intersected by inky creeks and small channels, which made human progression difficult and dangerous. As they appeared nearer and their figures took more natural proportions, it could be seen that each carried a gun; that one was a young girl, although dressed so

like her companion in shaggy pea-jacket and sou'wester as to be scarcely distinguished from him above the short skirt that came halfway down her high india-rubber fishing-boots. By the time they had reached firmer ground, and turned to look back at the sunset, it could be also seen that the likeness between their faces was remarkable. Both, had crisp, black, tightly curling hair; both had dark eyes and heavy eyebrows; both had quick vivid complexions, slightly heightened by the sea and wind. But more striking than their similarity of coloring was the likeness of expression and bearing. Both wore the same air of picturesque energy; both bore themselves with a like graceful effrontery and self-possession.

The young man continued his way. The young girl lingered for a moment looking seaward, with her small brown hand lifted to shade her eyes, — a precaution which her heavy eyebrows and long lashes seemed to render utterly gratuitous.

"Come along, Mag. What are ye waitin' for?" said the young man impatiently.

"Nothin'. Lookin' at that boat from the Fort." Her clear eyes were watching a small skiff, invisible to less keen-sighted observers,

aground upon a flat near the mouth of the channel. "Them chaps will have a high ole time gunnin' thar, stuck in the mud, and the tide goin' out like sixty!"

"Never you mind the sodgers," returned her companion, aggressively, "they kin take care o' their own precious skins, or Uncle Sam will do it for 'em, I reckon. Anyhow the people — that's you and me, Mag — is expected to pay for their foolishness. That's what they 're sent yer for. Ye oughter to be satisfied with that," he added with deep sarcasm.

"I reckon they ain't expected to do much off o' dry land, and they can't help bein' queer on the water," returned the young girl with a reflecting sense of justice.

"Then they ain't no call to go gunnin', and wastin' Guv'nment powder on ducks instead o' Injins."

"Thet's so," said the girl thoughtfully. "Wonder ef Guv'nment pays for them frocks the Kernel's girls went cavortin' round Logport in last Sunday — they looked like a cirkis."

"Like ez not the old Kernel gets it outer contracts — one way or another. *We* pay for it all the same," he added gloomily.

"Jest the same ez if they were *my* clothes," said the girl, with a quick, fiery, little laugh, "ain't it? Wonder how they'd like my sayin' that to 'em when they was prancin' round, eh, Jim?"

But her companion was evidently unprepared for this sweeping feminine deduction, and stopped it with masculine promptitude.

"Look yer — instead o' botherin' your head about what the Fort girls wear, you'd better trot along a little more lively. It's late enough now."

"But these darned boots hurt like pizen," said the girl, limping. "They swallowed a lot o' water over the tops while I was wadin' down there, and my feet go swashin' around like in a churn every step."

"Lean on me, baby," he returned, passing his arm around her waist, and dropping her head smartly on his shoulder. "Thar!" The act was brotherly and slightly contemptuous, but it was sufficient to at once establish their kinship.

They continued on thus for some moments in silence, the girl, I fear, after the fashion of her sex, taking the fullest advantage of this slightly sentimental and caressing attitude. They were moving now along the

edge of the Marsh, parallel with the line of rapidly fading horizon, following some trail only known to their keen youthful eyes. It was growing darker and darker. The cries of the sea-birds had ceased; even the call of a belated plover had died away inland; the hush of death lay over the black funereal pall of marsh at their side. The tide had run out with the day. Even the sea-breeze had lulled in this dead slack-water of all nature, as if waiting outside the bar with the ocean, the stars, and the night.

Suddenly the girl stopped and halted her companion. The faint far sound of a bugle broke the silence, if the idea of interruption could have been conveyed by the two or three exquisite vibrations that seemed born of that silence itself, and to fade and die in it without break or discord. Yet it was only the 'retreat' call from the Fort two miles distant and invisible.

The young girl's face had become irradiated, and her small mouth half opened as she listened. "Do you know, Jim," she said with a confidential sigh, "I allus put words to that when I hear it—it's so pow'ful pretty. It allus goes to me like this: 'Goes the day, Far away, With the light, And the

night Comes along — Comes along — Comes along — Like a-a so-o-ong.' ” She here lifted her voice, a sweet, fresh, boyish contralto, in such an admirable imitation of the bugle that her brother, after the fashion of more select auditors, was for a moment quite convinced that the words meant something. Nevertheless, as a brother, it was his duty to crush this weakness. “ Yes; and it says: ‘ Shut your head, Go to bed, ’ ” he returned irascibly; “ and *you* ’d better come along, if we ’re goin’ to hev any supper. There’s Yeller Bob hez got ahead of us over there with the game already.”

The girl glanced towards a slouching burdened figure that now appeared to be preceding them, straightened herself suddenly, and then looked attentively towards the Marsh.

“ Not the sodgers again ? ” said her brother impatiently.

“ No,” she said quickly; “ but if that don’t beat anythin’ ! I ’d hev sworn, Jim, that Yeller Bob was somewhere behind us. I saw him only jest now when ‘ Taps ’ sounded, somewhere over thar.” She pointed with a half-uneasy expression in quite another direction from that in which the slouching Yellow Bob had just loomed.

“Tell ye what, Mag, makin’ poetry outer bugle calls hez kinder muddled ye. *That’s* Yeller Bob ahead, and ye orter know Injins well enuff by this time to remember that they allus crop up jest when ye don’t expect them. And there’s the bresh jest afore us. Come!”

The ‘bresh,’ or low bushes, was really a line of stunted willows and alders that seemed to have gradually sunk into the level of the plain, but increased in size farther inland, until they grew to the height and density of a wood. Seen from the channel it had the appearance of a green cape or promontory thrust upon the Marsh. Passing through its tangled recesses, with the aid of some unerring instinct, the two companions emerged upon another and much larger level that seemed as illimitable as the bay. The strong breath of the ocean lying just beyond the bar and estuary they were now facing came to them salt and humid as another tide. The nearer expanse of open water reflected the after-glow, and lightened the landscape. And between the two wayfarers and the horizon rose, bleak and startling, the strange outlines of their home.

At first it seemed a ruined colonnade of

many pillars, whose base and pediment were buried in the earth, supporting a long parallelogram of entablature and cornices. But a second glance showed it to be a one-storied building, upheld above the Marsh by numberless piles placed at regular distances; some of them sunken or inclined from the perpendicular, increasing the first illusion. Between these pillars, which permitted a free circulation of air, and, at extraordinary tides, even the waters of the bay itself, the level waste of marsh, the bay, the surges of the bar, and finally the red horizon line, were distinctly visible. A railed gallery or platform, supported also on piles, and reached by steps from the Marsh, ran around the building, and gave access to the several rooms and offices.

But if the appearance of this lacustrine and amphibious dwelling was striking, and not without a certain rude and massive grandeur, its grounds and possessions, through which the brother and sister were still picking their way, were even more grotesque and remarkable. Over a space of half a dozen acres the flotsam and jetsam of years of tidal offerings were collected, and even guarded with a certain care. The

blackened hulks of huge uprooted trees, scarcely distinguishable from the fragments of genuine wrecks beside them, were securely fastened by chains to stakes and piles driven in the marsh, while heaps of broken and disjointed bamboo orange crates, held together by ropes of fibre, glistened like ligamented bones heaped in the dead valley. Masts, spars, fragments of shell-encrusted boats, binnacles, round-houses and galleys, and part of the after-deck of a coasting schooner, had ceased their wanderings and found rest in this vast cemetery of the sea. The legend on a wheel-house, the lettering on a stern or bow, served for mortuary inscription. Wailed over by the trade winds, mourned by lamenting sea-birds, once every year the tide visited its lost dead and left them wet with its tears.

To such a spot and its surroundings the atmosphere of tradition and mystery was not wanting. Six years ago Boone Culpepper had built the house, and brought to it his wife—variously believed to be a gypsy, a Mexican, a bright mulatto, a Digger Indian, a South Sea princess from Tahiti, somebody else's wife—but in reality a little Creole woman from New Orleans, with whom he had contracted a marriage, with other

gambling debts, during a winter's vacation from his home in Virginia. At the end of two years she had died, succumbing, as differently stated, from perpetual wet feet, or the misanthropic idiosyncrasies of her husband, and leaving behind her a girl of twelve and a boy of sixteen to console him. How futile was this bequest may be guessed from a brief summary of Mr. Culpepper's peculiarities. They were the development of a singular form of aggrandizement and misanthropy. On his arrival at Logport he had bought a part of the apparently valueless Dedlow Marsh from the Government at less than a dollar an acre, continuing his singular investment year by year until he was the owner of three leagues of amphibious domain. It was then discovered that this property carried with it the *water front* of divers valuable and convenient sites for manufactures and the commercial ports of a noble bay, as well as the natural *embarcaderos* of some 'lumbering' inland settlements. Boone Culpepper would not sell. Boone Culpepper would not rent or lease. Boone Culpepper held an invincible blockade of his neighbors, and the progress and improvement he despised — granting only, after a

royal fashion, occasional license, revocable at pleasure, in the shape of tolls, which amply supported him, with the game he shot in his kingfisher's eyrie on the Marsh. Even the Government that had made him powerful was obliged to 'condemn' a part of his property at an equitable price for the purposes of Fort Redwood, in which the adjacent town of Logport shared. And Boone Culpepper, unable to resist the act, refused to receive the compensation or quitclaim the town. In his scant intercourse with his neighbors he always alluded to it as his own, showed it to his children as part of their strange inheritance, and exhibited the starry flag that floated from the Fort as a flaunting insult to their youthful eyes. Hated, feared, and superstitiously shunned by some, regarded as a madman by others, familiarly known as 'The Kingfisher of Dedlow,' Boone Culpepper was one day found floating dead in his skiff, with a charge of shot through his head and shoulders. The shot-gun lying at his feet at the bottom of the boat indicated the 'accident' as recorded in the verdict of the coroner's jury — but not by the people. A thousand rumors of murder or suicide prevailed, but always with

the universal rider, 'Served him right.' So invincible was this feeling that but few attended his last rites, which took place at high water. The delay of the officiating clergyman lost the tide; the homely catafalque — his own boat — was left aground on the Marsh, and deserted by all mourners except the two children. Whatever he had instilled into them by precept and example, whatever took place that night in their lonely watch by his bier on the black marshes, it was certain that those who confidently looked for any change in the administration of the Dedlow Marsh were cruelly mistaken. The old Kingfisher was dead, but he had left in the nest two young birds, more beautiful and graceful, it was true, yet as fierce and tenacious of beak and talon.

II.

ARRIVING at the house, the young people ascended the outer flight of wooden steps, which bore an odd likeness to the companion-way of a vessel, and the gallery, or 'deck,' as it was called — where a number of nets, floats, and buoys thrown over the railing completed the nautical resemblance.

This part of the building was evidently devoted to kitchen, dining-room, and domestic offices; the principal room in the centre serving as hall or living-room, and communicating on the other side with two sleeping apartments. It was of considerable size, with heavy lateral beams across the ceiling — built, like the rest of the house, with a certain maritime strength — and looked not unlike a saloon cabin. An enormous open Franklin stove between the windows, as large as a chimney, blazing with drift-wood, gave light and heat to the apartment, and brought into flickering relief the boarded walls hung with the spoils of sea and shore, and glittering with gun-barrels. Fowling-pieces of all sizes, from the long ducking-gun mounted on a swivel for boat use to the light single-barrel or carbine, stood in racks against the walls; game-bags, revolvers in their holsters, hunting and fishing knives in their sheaths, depended from hooks above them. In one corner stood a harpoon; in another, two or three Indian spears for salmon. The carpetless floor and rude chairs and settles were covered with otter, mink, beaver, and a quantity of valuable seal-skins, with a few larger pelts of the bear and elk.

The only attempt at decoration was the displayed wings and breasts of the wood and harlequin duck, the muir, the cormorant, the gull, the gannet, and the femininely delicate half-mourning of petrel and plover, nailed against the wall. The influence of the sea was dominant above all, and asserted its saline odors even through the spice of the curling drift-wood smoke that half veiled the ceiling.

A berry-eyed old Indian woman with the complexion of dried salmon; her daughter, also with berry eyes, and with a face that seemed wholly made of a moist laugh; 'Yellow Bob,' a Digger 'buck,' so called from the prevailing ochre markings of his cheek, and 'Washooh,' an ex-chief; a nondescript in a blanket, looking like a cheap and dirty doll whose fibrous hair was badly nailed on his carved wooden head, composed the Culpepper household. While the two former were preparing supper in the adjacent dining-room, Yellow Bob, relieved of his burden of game, appeared on the gallery and beckoned mysteriously to his master through the window. James Culpepper went out, returned quickly, and after a minute's hesitation and an uneasy glance towards his sister,

who had meantime pushed back her sou'-wester from her forehead, and without taking off her jacket had dropped into a chair before the fire with her back towards him, took his gun noiselessly from the rack, and saying carelessly that he would be back in a moment, disappeared.

Left to herself, Maggie coolly pulled off her long boots and stockings, and comfortably opposed to the fire two very pretty feet and ankles, whose delicate purity was slightly blue-bleached by confinement in the tepid sea-water. The contrast of their waxen whiteness with her blue woolen skirt, and with even the skin of her sunburnt hands and wrists, apparently amused her, and she sat for some moments with her elbows on her knees, her skirts slightly raised, contemplating them, and curling her toes with evident satisfaction. The firelight playing upon the rich coloring of her face, the fringe of jet-black curls that almost met the thick sweep of eyebrows, and left her only a white strip of forehead, her short upper lip and small chin, rounded but resolute, completed a piquant and striking figure. The rich brown shadows on the smoke-stained walls and ceiling, the occasional starting into

relief of the scutcheons of brilliant plumage, and the momentary glitter of the steel barrels, made a quaint background to this charming picture. Sitting there, and following some lingering memory of her tramp on the Marsh, she hummed to herself a few notes of the bugle call that had impressed her — at first softly, and finally with the full pitch of her voice.

Suddenly she stopped.

There was a faint and unmistakable tapping on the floor beneath her. It was distinct, but cautiously given, as if intended to be audible to her alone. For a moment she stood upright, her feet still bare and glistening, on the otter skin that served as a rug. There were two doors to the room, one from which her brother had disappeared, which led to the steps, the other giving on the back gallery, looking inland. With a quick instinct she caught up her gun and ran to that one, but not before a rapid scramble near the railing was followed by a cautious opening of the door. She was just in time to shut it on the extended arm and light blue sleeve of an army overcoat that protruded through the opening, and for a moment threw her whole weight against it.

"A dhrop of whiskey, Miss, for the love of God."

She retained her hold, cocked her weapon, and stepped back a pace from the door. The blue sleeve was followed by the rest of the overcoat, and a blue cap with the infantry blazoning, and the letter H on its peak. They were for the moment more distinguishable than the man beneath them — grimed and blackened with the slime of the Marsh. But what could be seen of his mud-stained face was more grotesque than terrifying. A combination of weakness and audacity, insinuation and timidity struggled through the dirt for expression. His small blue eyes were not ill-natured, and even the intruding arm trembled more from exhaustion than passion.

"On'y a dhrop, Miss," he repeated piteously, "and av ye pleeze, quick! afore I'm stharved with the cold entoirely."

She looked at him intently — without lowering her gun.

"Who are you?"

"Thin, it's the truth I'll tell ye, Miss — whisth then!" he said in a half-whisper; "I'm a deserter!"

"Then it was *you* that was doggin' us on the Marsh?"

"It was the sarjint I was lavin', Miss."

She looked at him hesitatingly.

"Stay outside there; if you move a step into the room, I'll blow you out of it."

He stepped back on the gallery. She closed the door, bolted it, and still holding the gun, opened a cupboard, poured out a glass of whiskey, and returning to the door, opened it and handed him the liquor.

She watched him drain it eagerly, saw the fiery stimulant put life into his shivering frame, trembling hands, and kindle his dull eye — and — quietly raised her gun again.

"Ah, put it down, Miss, put it down! Fwhot's the use? Sure the bullets yee carry in them oiyes of yours is more deadly! It's out here oi'll sthand, glory be to God, all night, without movin' a fut till the sarjint comes to take me, av ye won't level them oiyes at me like that. Ah, whirra! look at that now! but it's a gooddess she is — the livin' Jaynus of warr, standin' there like a statoo, wid her alybaster fut put forward."

In her pride and conscious superiority, any suggestion of shame at thus appearing before a common man and a mendicant was as impossible to her nature as it would have been to a queen or the goddess of his simile.

His presence and his compliment alike passed her calm modesty unchallenged. The wretched scamp recognized the fact and felt its power, and it was with a superstitious reverence asserting itself through his native extravagance that he raised his grimy hand to his cap in military salute and became respectfully rigid.

"Then the sodgers were huntin' *you*?" she said thoughtfully, lowering her weapon.

"Thru for you, Miss — they worr, and it's meself that was lyin' flat in the ditch wid me faytures makin' an illigant cast in the mud — more betoken, as ye see even now — and the sarjint and his daytail thrampin' round me. It was thin that the mortal cold sthruck thro' me mouth, and made me wake for the whiskey that would resthore me."

"What did you desert fer?"

"Ah, list to that now! Fwhat did I desert fer? Shure ev there was the ghost of an inemy round, it's meself that would be in the front now! But it was the letthers from me ould mother, Miss, that is sthruck wid a mortal illness — long life to her! — in County Clare, and me sisthers in Ninth Avenue in New York, fornint the daypo, that is brekken their harruts over me listin' in

the Fourth Infanthry to do duty in a haythen wilderness. Av it was the cavalry — and it's me own father that was in the In-nishkillen Dthragoons, Miss — oi would n't moind. Wid a horse betune me legs, it's on parade oi'd be now, Miss, and not wandhering over the bare flure of the Marsh, stharved wid the cold, the thirst, and hunger, wid the mud and the moire thick on me; facin' an illigant young leddy as is the ekal ov a Fayld Marshal's darter — not to sphake ov Kernal Preston's — ez could n't hold a candle to her."

Brought up on the Spanish frontier, Maggie Culpepper was one of the few American girls who was not familiar with the Irish race. The rare smile that momentarily lit up her petulant mouth seemed to justify the intruder's praise. But it passed quickly, and she returned dryly:

"That means you want more drink, suthin' to eat, and clothes. Suppose my brother comes back and ketches you here?"

"Shure, Miss, he's just now hunten me, along wid his two haythen Diggers, beyond the laygoon there. It worr the yellar one that sphotted me lyin' there in the ditch; it worr only your own oiyes, Miss — more

power to their beauty for that! — that saw me folly him unbeknownst here; and that desaved them, ye see!”

The young girl remained for an instant silent and thoughtful.

“We’re no friends of the Fort,” she said finally, “but I don’t reckon for that reason my brother will cotton to *you*. Stay out thar where ye are, till I come to ye. If you hear me singin’ again, you’ll know he’s come back, and ye’d better scoot with what you’ve already got, and be thankful.”

She shut the door again and locked it, went into the dining-room, returned with some provisions wrapped in paper, took a common wicker flask from the wall, passed into her brother’s bedroom, and came out with a flannel shirt, overalls, and a coarse Indian blanket, and, reopening the door, placed them before the astonished and delighted vagabond. His eye glistened; he began, “Glory be to God,” but for once his habitual extravagance failed him. Nature triumphed with a more eloquent silence over his well-worn art. He hurriedly wiped his begrimed face and eyes with the shirt she had given him, and catching the sleeve of her rough pea-jacket in his dirty hand, raised it to his lips.

“Go!” she said imperiously. “Get away while you can.”

“Av it vas me last words — it’s speechless oi am,” he stammered, and disappeared over the railing.

She remained for a moment holding the door half open, and gazing into the darkness that seemed to flow in like a tide. Then she shut it, and going into her bedroom resumed her interrupted toilette. When she emerged again she was smartly stockinged and slippered, and even the blue serge skirt was exchanged for a bright print, with a white fichu tied around her throat. An attempt to subdue her rebellious curls had resulted in the construction from their ruins of a low Norman arch across her forehead with pillared abutments of ringlets. When her brother returned a few moments later she did not look up, but remained, perhaps a little ostentatiously, bending over the fire.

“Bob allowed that the Fort boat was huntin’ *men* — deserters, I reckon,” said Jim aggrievedly. “Wanted me to believe that he *saw* one on the Marsh hidin’. On’y an Injin lie, I reckon, to git a little extra fire-water, for toting me out to the bresh on a fool’s errand.”

"Oh, *that's* where you went!" said Maggie, addressing the fire. "Since when hev you tuk partnership with the Guv'nment and Kernel Preston to hunt up and take keer of their property?"

"Well, I ain't goin' to hev such wreckage as they pick up and enlist set adrift on our marshes, Mag," said Jim decidedly.

"What would you hev done had you ketched him?" said Maggie, looking suddenly into her brother's face.

"Given him a dose of snipe-shot that he'd remember, and be thankful it was n't slugs," said Jim promptly. Observing a deeper seriousness in her attitude, he added, "Why, if it was in war-time he'd get a *ball* from them sodgers on sight."

"Yes; but *you* ain't got no call to interfere," said Maggie.

"Ain't I? Why, he's no better than an outlaw. I ain't sure that he has n't been stealin' or killin' somebody over theer."

"Not *that* man!" said Maggie impulsively.

"Not what man?" said her brother, facing her quickly.

"Why," returned Maggie, repairing her indiscretion with feminine dexterity, "not

any man who might have knocked you and me over on the marshes in the dusk, and grabbed our guns."

"Wish he'd hev tried it," said the brother, with a superior smile, but a quickly rising color. "Where d'ye suppose I'd hev been all the while?"

Maggie saw her mistake, and for the first time in her life resolved to keep a secret from her brother — overnight. "Supper's gettin' cold," she said, rising.

They went into the dining-room — an apartment as plainly furnished as the one they had quitted, but in its shelves, cupboards, and closely fitting boarding bearing out the general nautical suggestion of the house — and seated themselves before a small table on which their frugal meal was spread. In this *tête-à-tête* position Jim suddenly laid down his knife and fork and stared at his sister.

"Hello!"

"What's the matter?" said Maggie, starting slightly. "How you do skeer one."

"Who's been prinkin', eh?"

"My ha'r was in kinks all along o' that hat," said Maggie, with a return of higher

color, "and I had to straighten it. It's a boy's hat, not a girl's."

"But that necktie and that gown—and all those frills and tuckers?" continued Jim generalizing, with a rapid twirling of his fingers over her. "Are you expectin' Judge Martin, or the Expressman, this evening?"

Judge Martin was the lawyer of Logport, who had proven her father's will, and had since raved about his single interview with the Kingfisher's beautiful daughter; the Expressman was a young fellow who was popularly supposed to have left his heart while delivering another valuable package on Maggie in person, and had "never been the same man since." It was a well-worn fraternal pleasantry that had done duty many a winter's evening, as a happy combination of moral admonition and cheerfulness. Maggie usually paid it the tribute of a quick little laugh and a sisterly pinch, but that evening those marks of approbation were withheld.

"Jim dear," said she, when their Spartan repast was concluded and they were reëstablished before the living-room fire. "What was it the Redwood Mill Kempany offered you for that piece near Dead Man's Slough?"

Jim took his pipe from his lips long enough to say, "Ten thousand dollars," and put it back again.

"And what do ye kalkilate all our property, letting alone this yer house, and the driftwood front, is worth all together?"

"Includin' wot the Gov'nment owes us? — for that's all ours, ye know?" said Jim quickly.

"No — leavin' that out — jest for greens, you know," suggested Maggie.

"Well nigh ontar a hundred and seventy-five thousand dollars, I reckon, by and large."

"That's a heap o' money, Jim! I reckon old Kernel Preston would n't raise that in a hundred years," continued Maggie, warming her knees by the fire.

"In five million years," said Jim, promptly sweeping away further discussion. After a pause he added, "You and me, Mag, kin see anybody's pile, and go 'em fifty thousand better."

There were a few moments of complete silence, in which Maggie smoothed her knees, and Jim's pipe, which seemed to have become gorged and apoplectic with its owner's wealth, snored unctuously.

"Jim dear, what if — it's on'y an idea of mine, you know — what if you sold that piece to the Redwood Mill, and we jest tuk that money and — and — and jest lifted the ha'r offer them folks at Logport? Jest astonished 'em! Jest tuk the best rooms in that new hotel, got a hoss and buggy, dressed ourselves, you and me, fit to kill, and made them Fort people take a back seat in the Lord's Tabernacle, oncet for all. You see what I mean, Jim," she said hastily, as her brother seemed to be succumbing, like his pipe, in apoplectic astonishment, "jest on'y to *show* 'em what we *could* do if we keerd. Lord! when we done it and spent the money we'd jest snap our fingers and skip back yer ez nat'ral ez life! Ye don't think, Jim," she said, suddenly turning half fiercely upon him, "that I'd allow to *live* among 'em — to stay a menet after that!"

Jim laid down his pipe and gazed at his sister with stony deliberation. "And — what — do — you — kalkilate — to make by all that?" he said with scornful distinctness.

"Why, jest to show 'em we *have* got money, and could buy 'em all up if we

wanted to," returned Maggie, sticking boldly to her guns, albeit with a vague conviction that her fire was weakened through elevation, and somewhat alarmed at the deliberation of the enemy.

"And you mean to say they don't know it now," he continued with slow derision.

"No," said Maggie. "Why, theer's that new school-marm over at Logport, you know, Jim, the one that wanted to take your picter in your boat for a young smuggler or fancy pirate or Eyetalian fisherman, and allowed that you'r handsomed some, and offered to pay you for sittin' — do you reckon *she'd* believe you owned the land her schoolhouse was built on. No! Lots of 'em don't. Lots of 'em thinks we're poor and low down — and them ez does n't, thinks" —

"What?" asked her brother sharply.

"That we're *mean*."

The quick color came to Jim's cheek. "So," he said, facing her quickly, "for the sake of a lot of riff-raff and scum that's drifted here around us — jest for the sake of cuttin' a swell before them — you'll go out among the hounds ez allowed your mother was a Spanish nigger or a kanaka, ez called your father a pirate and landgrabber, ez

much as allowed he was shot by some one or killed himself a purpose, ez said you was a heathen and a looney because you did n't go to school or church along with their trash, ez kept away from Maw's sickness ez if it was smallpox, and Dad's fun'ral ez if he was a hoss-thief, and left you and me to watch his coffin on the marshes all night till the tide kem back. And now you — *you* that jined hands with me that night over our father lyin' there cold and despised — ez if he was a dead dog thrown up by the tide — and swore that ez long ez that tide ebbed and flowed it could n't bring you to them, or them to you agin! You now want — what? What? Why, to go and cast your lot among 'em, and live among 'em, and join in their God-forsaken holler foolishness, and — and — and " —

"Stop! It's a lie! I *did* n't say that. Don't you dare to say it!" said the girl, springing to her feet, and facing her brother in turn, with flashing eyes.

For a moment the two stared at each other — it might have been as in a mirror, so perfectly were their passions reflected in each line, shade, and color of the other's face. It was as if they had each confronted their own

passionate and willful souls, and were frightened. It had often occurred before, always with the same invariable ending. The young man's eyes lowered first; the girl's filled with tears.

"Well, ef ye did n't mean that, what did ye mean?" said Jim, sinking, with sullen apology, back into his chair.

"I — only — meant it — for — for — revenge!" sobbed Maggie.

"Oh!" said Jim, as if allowing his higher nature to be touched by this noble instinct. "But I did n't jest see where the revenge kem in."

"No? But, never mind now, Jim," said Maggie, ostentatiously ignoring, after the fashion of her sex, the trouble she had provoked; "but to think — that — that — you thought" — (sobbing).

"But I did n't, Mag" — (caressingly).

With this very vague and impotent conclusion, Maggie permitted herself to be drawn beside her brother, and for a few moments they plumed each other's ruffled feathers, and smoothed each other's lifted crests, like two beautiful young specimens of that halcyon genus to which they were popularly supposed to belong. At the end of half an

hour Jim rose, and, yawning slightly, said in a perfunctory way :

“ Where ’s the book ? ”

The book in question was the Bible. It had been the self-imposed custom of these two young people to read aloud a chapter every night as their one vague formula of literary and religious discipline. When it was produced, Maggie, presuming on his affectionate and penitential condition, suggested that to-night he should pick out “ suthin’ interestin’.” But this unorthodox frivolity was sternly put aside by Jim — albeit, by way of compromise, he agreed to “ chance it,” *i. e.*, open its pages at random.

He did so. Generally he allowed himself a moment’s judicious pause for a certain chaste preliminary inspection necessary before reading aloud to a girl. To-night he omitted that modest precaution, and in a pleasant voice, which in reading was singularly free from colloquial infelicities of pronunciation, began at once :

“ ‘ Curse ye Meroz, said the angel of the Lord, curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof ; because they came not to the help of the Lord, to the help of the Lord against the mighty.’ ”

"Oh, you looked first," said Maggie.

"I did n't now — honest Injin! I just opened."

"Go on," said Maggie, eagerly shoving him and interposing her neck over his shoulder.

And Jim continued Deborah's wonderful song of Jael and Sisera to the bitter end of its strong monosyllabic climax.

"There," he said, closing the volume, "that's what *I* call revenge. That's the real Scripture thing — no fancy frills theer."

"Yes; but, Jim dear, don't you see that she treated him first — sorter got round him with free milk and butter, and reg'larly blandished him," argued Maggie earnestly.

But Jim declined to accept this feminine suggestion, or to pursue the subject further, and after a fraternal embrace they separated for the night. Jim lingered long enough to look after the fastening of the door and windows, and Maggie remained for some moments at her casement, looking across the gallery to the Marsh beyond.

The moon had risen, the tide was half up. Whatever sign or trace of alien footprint or occupation had been there was already smoothly obliterated; even the configuration

of the land had changed. A black cape had disappeared, a level line of shore had been eaten into by teeth of glistening silver. The whole dark surface of the Marsh was beginning to be streaked with shining veins as if a new life was coursing through it. Part of the open bay before the Fort, encroaching upon the shore, seemed in the moonlight to be reaching a white and outstretched arm towards the nest of the Kingfisher.

III.

THE reveille at Fort Redwood had been supplemented full five minutes by the voice of Lieutenant George Calvert's servant, before that young officer struggled from his bed. His head was splitting, his tongue and lips were dry and feverish, his bloodshot eyes were shrinking from the insufferable light of the day, his mind a confused medley of the past night and the present morning, of cards and wild revelry, and the vision of a reproachfully trim orderly standing at his door with reports and orders which he now held composedly in his hand. For Lieutenant Calvert had been enjoying a symposium

variously known as "Stag Feed" and "A Wild Stormy Night" with several of his brother officers, and a sickening conviction that it was not the first or the last time he had indulged in these festivities. At that moment he loathed himself, and then after the usual derelict fashion cursed the fate that had sent him, after graduating, to a frontier garrison — the dull monotony of whose duties made the Border horse-play of dissipation a relief. Already he had reached the miserable point of envying the veteran capacities of his superiors and equals. "If I could drink like Kirby or Crowninshield, or if there was any other cursed thing a man could do in this hole," he had wretchedly repeated to himself, after each misspent occasion, and yet already he was looking forward to them as part of a 'sub's' duty and worthy his emulation. Already the dream of social recreation fostered by West Point had been rudely dispelled. Beyond the garrison circle of Colonel Preston's family and two officers' wives, there was no society. The vague distrust and civil jealousy with which some frontier communities regard the Federal power, heightened in this instance by the uncompromising attitude the Government

had taken towards the settlers' severe Indian policy, had kept the people of Logport aloof from the Fort. The regimental band might pipe to them on Saturdays, but they would not dance.

Howbeit, Lieutenant Calvert dressed himself with uncertain hands but mechanical regularity and neatness, and, under the automatic training of discipline and duty, managed to button his tunic tightly over his feelings, to pull himself together with his sword-belt, compressing a still cadet-like waist, and to present that indescribable combination of precision and jauntiness which his brother officers too often allowed to lapse into frontier carelessness. His closely clipped light hair, yet dripping from a plunge in the cold water, had been brushed and parted with military exactitude, and when surmounted by his cap, with the peak in an artful suggestion of extra smartness tipped forward over his eyes, only his pale face — a shade lighter than his little blonde moustache — showed his last night's excesses. He was mechanically reaching for his sword and staring confusedly at the papers on his table when his servant interrupted :

“Major Bromley arranged that Lieuten-

ant Kirby takes your sash this morning, as you 're not well, sir ; and you 're to report for special to the colonel," he added, pointing discreetly to the envelope.

Touched by this consideration of his superior, Major Bromley, who had been one of the veterans of last night's engagement, Calvert mastered the contents of the envelope without the customary anathema of specials, said, "Thank you, Parks," and passed out on the veranda.

The glare of the quiet sunlit quadrangle, clean as a well-swept floor, the whitewashed walls and galleries of the barrack buildings beyond, the white and green palisade of officers' cottages on either side, and the glitter of a sentry's bayonet, were for a moment intolerable to him. Yet, by a kind of subtle irony, never before had the genius and spirit of the vocation he had chosen seemed to be as incarnate as in the scene before him. Seclusion, self-restraint, cleanliness, regularity, sobriety, the atmosphere of a wholesome life, the austere reserve of a monastery without its mysterious or pensive meditation, were all there. To escape which, he had of his own free will successively accepted a fool's distraction, the inevitable result of which was,

the viewing of them the next morning with tremulous nerves and aching eyeballs.

An hour later, Lieutenant George Calvert had received his final instructions from Colonel Preston to take charge of a small detachment to recover and bring back certain deserters, but notably one, Dennis M'Cafrey of Company H, charged additionally with mutinous solicitation and example. As Calvert stood before his superior, that distinguished officer, whose oratorical powers had been considerably stimulated through a long course of "returning thanks for the Army," slightly expanded his chest and said paternally :

"I am aware, Mr. Calvert, that duties of this kind are somewhat distasteful to young officers, and are apt to be considered in the light of police detail; but I must remind you that no one part of a soldier's duty can be held more important or honorable than another, and that the fulfilment of any one, however trifling, must, with honor to himself and security to his comrades, receive his fullest devotion. A sergeant and a file of men might perform your duty, but I require, in addition, the discretion, courtesy, and consideration of a gentleman who will

command an equal respect from those with whom his duty brings him in contact. The unhappy prejudices which the settlers show to the military authority here render this, as you are aware, a difficult service, but I believe that you will, without forgetting the respect due to yourself and the Government you represent, avoid arousing these prejudices by any harshness, or inviting any conflict with the civil authority. The limits of their authority you will find in your written instructions; but you might gain their confidence, and impress them, Mr. Calvert, with the idea of your being their *auxiliary* in the interests of justice — you understand. Even if you are unsuccessful in bringing back the men, you will do your best to ascertain if their escape has been due to the sympathy of the settlers, or even with their preliminary connivance. They may not be aware that inciting enlisted men to desert is a criminal offence; you will use your own discretion in informing them of the fact or not, as occasion may serve you. I have only to add, that while you are on the waters of this bay and the land covered by its tides, you have no opposition of authority, and are responsible to no one but your military superiors.

Good-bye, Mr. Calvert. Let me hear a good account of you."

Considerably moved by Colonel Preston's manner, which was as paternal and real as his rhetoric was somewhat perfunctory, Calvert half forgot his woes as he stepped from the commandant's piazza. But he had to face a group of his brother officers, who were awaiting him.

"Good-bye, Calvert," said Major Bromley; "a day or two out on grass won't hurt you—and a change from commissary whiskey will put you all right. By the way, if you hear of any better stuff at Westport than they're giving us here, sample it and let us know. Take care of yourself. Give your men a chance to talk to you now and then, and you may get something from them, especially Donovan. Keep your eye on Ramon. You can trust your sergeant straight along."

"Good-bye, George," said Kirby. "I suppose the old man told you that, although no part of a soldier's duty was better than another; your service was a very delicate one, just fitted for you, eh? He always does when he's cut out some hellish scrub-work for a chap. And told you, too, that as long

as you did n't go ashore, and kept to a dispatch-boat, or an eight-oared gig, where you could n't deploy your men, or dress a line, you'd be invincible."

"He did say something like that," smiled Calvert, with an uneasy recollection, however, that it was *the* part of his superior's speech that particularly impressed him.

"Of course," said Kirby gravely, "*that*, as an infantry officer, is clearly your duty."

"And don't forget, George," said Rollins still more gravely, "that, whatever may befall you, you belong to a section of that numerically small but powerfully diversified organization — the American Army. Remember that in the hour of peril you can address your men in any language, and be perfectly understood. And remember that when you proudly stand before them, the eyes not only of your own country, but of nearly all the others, are upon you! Good-bye, Georgey. I heard the major hint something about whiskey. They say that old pirate, Kingfisher Culpepper, had a stock of the real thing from Robertson County laid in his shebang on the Marsh just before he died. Pity we are n't on terms with them, for the cubs cannot drink it, and might be induced

to sell. Should n't wonder, by the way, if your friend M'Caffrey was hanging round somewhere there; he always had a keen scent. You might confiscate it as an "incitement to desertion," you know. The girl's pretty, and ought to be growing up now."

But haply at this point the sergeant stopped further raillery by reporting the detachment ready; and drawing his sword, Calvert, with a confused head, a remorseful heart, but an unfaltering step, marched off his men on his delicate mission.

It was four o'clock when he entered Jonesville. Following a matter-of-fact idea of his own, he had brought his men the greater distance by a circuitous route through the woods, thus avoiding the ostentatious exposure of his party on the open bay in a well-manned boat to an extended view from the three leagues of shore and marsh opposite. Crossing the stream, which here separated him from the Dedlow Marsh by the common ferry, he had thus been enabled to halt unperceived below the settlement and occupy the two roads by which the fugitives could escape inland. He had deemed it not impossible that, after the previous visit of the

sergeant, the deserters hidden in the vicinity might return to Jonesville in the belief that the visit would not be repeated so soon. Leaving a part of his small force to patrol the road and another to deploy over the upland meadows, he entered the village. By the exercise of some boyish diplomacy and a certain prepossessing grace, which he knew when and how to employ, he became satisfied that the objects of his quest were not *there* — however, their whereabouts might have been known to the people. Dividing his party again, he concluded to take a corporal and a few men and explore the lower marshes himself.

The preoccupation of duty, exercise, and perhaps, above all, the keen stimulus of the iodine-laden salt air seemed to clear his mind and invigorate his body. He had never been in the Marsh before, and enjoyed its novelty with the zest of youth. It was the hour when the tide of its feathered life was at its flood. Clouds of duck and teal passing from the fresh water of the river to the salt pools of the marshes perpetually swept his path with flying shadows; at times it seemed as if even the uncertain ground around him itself arose and sped away on

dusky wings. The vicinity of hidden pools and sloughs was betrayed by startled splashings; a few paces from their marching feet arose the sunlit pinions of a swan. The air was filled with multitudinous small cries and pipings. In this vocal confusion it was some minutes before he recognized the voice of one of his out-flankers calling to the other.

An important discovery had been made. In a long tongue of bushes that ran down to the Marsh they had found a mud-stained uniform, complete even to the cap, bearing the initial of the deserter's company.

"Is there any hut or cabin hereabouts, Schmidt?" asked Calvert.

"Dot vos schoost it, Lefdennun," replied his corporal. "Dot vos de shanty from der Kingvisher — old Gulbebbber. I pet a dollar, py shimminy, dot der men haf der gekommt."

He pointed through the brake to a long, low building that now raised itself, white in the sunlight, above the many blackened piles. Calvert saw in a single reconnoitring glance that it had but one approach — the flight of steps from the Marsh. Instructing his men to fall in on the outer edge of the

brake and await his orders, he quickly made his way across the space and ascended the steps. Passing along the gallery he knocked at the front door. There was no response. He repeated his knock. Then the window beside it opened suddenly, and he was confronted with the double-muzzle of a long ducking-gun. Glancing instinctively along the barrels, he saw at their other extremity the bright eyes, brilliant color, and small set mouth of a remarkably handsome girl. It was the fact, and to the credit of his training, that he paid more attention to the eyes than to the challenge of the shining tubes before him.

"Jest stop where you are — will you!" said the girl determinedly.

Calvert's face betrayed not the slightest terror or surprise. Immovable as on parade, he carried his white gloved hand to his cap, and said gently, "With pleasure."

"Oh yes," said the girl quickly; "but if you move a step I'll jest blow you and your gloves offer that railin' inter the Marsh."

"I trust not," returned Calvert, smiling.

"And why?"

"Because it would deprive me of the pleasure of a few moments' conversation with

you — and I've only one pair of gloves with me."

He was still watching her beautiful eyes — respectfully, admiringly, and strategically. For he was quite convinced that if he *did* move she would certainly discharge one or both barrels at him.

"Where's the rest of you?" she continued sharply.

"About three hundred yards away, in the covert, not near enough to trouble you."

"Will they come here?"

"I trust not."

"You trust not?" she repeated scornfully. "Why?"

"Because they would be disobeying orders."

She lowered her gun slightly, but kept her black brows levelled at him. "I reckon I'm a match for *you*," she said, with a slightly contemptuous glance at his slight figure, and opened the door. For a moment they stood looking at each other. He saw, besides the handsome face and eyes that had charmed him, a tall slim figure, made broader across the shoulders by an open pea-jacket that showed a man's red flannel shirt belted at the waist over a blue skirt, with

the collar knotted by a sailor's black handkerchief, and turned back over a pretty though sunburnt throat. She saw a rather undersized young fellow in a jaunty undress uniform, scant of gold braid, and bearing only the single gold shoulder-bars of his rank, but scrupulously neat and well fitting. Light-colored hair cropped close, the smallest of light moustaches, clear and penetrating blue eyes, and a few freckles completed a picture that did not prepossess her. She was therefore the more inclined to resent the perfect ease and self-possession with which the stranger carried off these manifest defects before her.

She laid aside the gun, put her hands deep in the pockets of her pea-jacket, and, slightly squaring her shoulders, said curtly, "What do you want?"

"A very little information, which I trust it will not trouble you to give me. My men have just discovered the uniform belonging to a deserter from the Fort lying in the bushes yonder. Can you give me the slightest idea how it came there?"

"What right have you trapseing over our property?" she said, turning upon him sharply, with a slight paling of color.

"None whatever."

"Then what did you come for?"

"To ask that permission, in case you would give me no information."

"Why don't you ask my brother, and not a woman? Were you afraid?"

"He could hardly have done me the honor of placing me in more peril than you have," returned Calvert, smiling. "Then I have the pleasure of addressing Miss Culpepper?"

"I'm Jim Culpepper's sister."

"And, I believe, equally able to give or refuse the permission I ask."

"And what if I refuse?"

"Then I have only to ask pardon for having troubled you, go back, and return here with the tide. You don't resist *that* with a shot-gun, do you?" he asked pleasantly.

Maggie Culpepper was already familiar with the accepted theory of the supreme jurisdiction of the Federal Sea. She half turned her back upon him, partly to show her contempt, but partly to evade the domination of his clear, good-humored, and self-sustained little eyes.

"I don't know anythin' about your deserters, nor what rags o' theirs happen to be

floated up here," she said, angrily, "and don't care to. You kin do what you like."

"Then I'm afraid I should remain here a little longer, Miss Culpepper; but my duty" —

"Your wot?" she interrupted, disdainfully.

"I suppose I *am* talking shop," he said smilingly. "Then my business" —

"Your business — pickin' up half-starved runaways!"

"And, I trust, sometimes a kind friend," he suggested, with a grave bow.

"You *trust*? Look yer, young man," she said, with her quick, fierce, little laugh, "I reckon you *trust* a heap too much!" She would like to have added, "with your freckled face, red hair, and little eyes" — but this would have obliged her to face them again, which she did not care to do.

Calvert stepped back, lifted his hand to his cap, still pleasantly, and then walked gravely along the gallery, down the steps, and towards the cover. From her window, unseen, she followed his neat little figure moving undeviatingly on, without looking to the left or right, and still less towards the house he had just quitted. Then she saw

the sunlight flash on cross-belt plates and steel barrels, and a light blue line issued from out the dark green bushes, round the point, and disappeared. And then it suddenly occurred to her what she had been doing! This, then, was her first step towards that fancy she had so lately conceived, quarrelled over with her brother, and lay awake last night to place anew, in spite of all opposition! This was her brilliant idea of dazzling and subduing Logport and the Fort! Had she grown silly, or what had happened? Could she have dreamed of the coming of this whipper-snapper, with his insufferable airs, after that beggarly deserter? I am afraid that for a few moments the miserable fugitive had as small a place in Maggie's sympathy as the redoubtable whipper-snapper himself. And now the cherished dream of triumph and conquest was over! What a "looney" she had been! Instead of inviting him in, and outdoing him in "company manners," and "fooling" him about the deserter, and then blazing upon him afterwards at Logport in the glory of her first spent wealth and finery, she had driven him away!

And now "he'll go and tell — tell the

Fort girls of his hairbreadth escape from the claws of the Kingfisher's daughter!"

The thought brought a few bitter tears to her eyes, but she wiped them away. The thought brought also the terrible conviction that Jim was right, that there could be nothing but open antagonism between them and the traducers of their parents, as she herself had instinctively shown! But she presently wiped that conviction away also, as she had her tears.

Half an hour later she was attracted by the appearance from the windows of certain straggling blue spots on the upland that seemed moving diagonally towards the Marsh. She did not know that it was Calvert's second "detail" joining him, but believed for a moment that he had not yet departed, and was strangely relieved. Still later the frequent disturbed cries of coot, heron, and marsh-hen, recognizing the presence of unusual invaders of their solitude, distracted her yet more, and forced her at last with increasing color and an uneasy sense of shyness to steal out to the gallery for a swift furtive survey of the Marsh. But an utterly unexpected sight met her eyes, and kept her motionless.

The birds were rising everywhere and drifting away with querulous perturbation before a small but augmented blue detachment that was moving with monotonous regularity towards the point of bushes where she had seen the young officer previously disappear. In their midst, between two soldiers with fixed bayonets, marched the man whom even at that distance she instantly recognized as the deserter of the preceding night, in the very clothes she had given him. To complete her consternation, a little to the right marched the young officer also, but accompanied by, and apparently on the most amicable terms with, Jim — her own brother!

To forget all else and dart down the steps, flying towards the point of bushes, scarcely knowing why or what she was doing, was to Maggie the impulse and work of a moment. When she had reached it the party were not twenty paces away. But here a shyness and hesitation again seized her, and she shrank back in the bushes with an instinctive cry to her brother inarticulate upon her lips. They came nearer, they were opposite to her; her brother Jim keeping step with the invader, and even conversing with him

with an animation she had seldom seen upon his face — they passed ! She had been unnoticed except by one. The roving eye of the deserter had detected her handsome face among the leaves, slightly turned towards it, and poured out his whole soul in a single swift wink of eloquent but indescribable confidence.

When they had quite gone, she crept back to the house, a little reassured, but still tremulous. When her brother returned at nightfall, he found her brooding over the fire, in the same attitude as on the previous night.

“ I reckon ye might hev seen me go by with the sodgers,” he said, seating himself beside her, a little awkwardly, and with an unusual assumption of carelessness.

Maggie, without looking up, was languidly surprised. He had been with the soldiers — and where ?

“ About two hours ago I met this yer Leftenant Calvert,” he went on with increasing awkwardness, “ and — oh, I say, Mag — he said he saw you, and hoped he had n’t troubled ye, and — and — ye saw him, did n’t ye ? ”

Maggie, with all the red of the fire con-

centrated in her cheek as she gazed at the flame, believed carelessly "that she had seen a shrimp in uniform asking questions."

"Oh, he ain't a bit stuck up," said Jim quickly, "that's what I like about him. He's ez nat'ral ez you be, and tuck my arm, walkin' around, careless-like, laffen at what he was doin', ez ef it was a game, and he was n't sole commander of forty men. He's only a year or two older than me — and — and" — he stopped and looked uneasily at Maggie.

"So ye've bin craw-fishin' agin?" said Maggie, in her deepest and most scornful contralto.

"Who's craw-fishin'?" he retorted, angrily.

"What's this backen out o' what you said yesterday? What's all this trucklin' to the Fort now?"

"What? Well now, look yer," said Jim, rising suddenly, with reproachful indignation, "darned if I don't jest tell ye everythin'. I promised *him* I would n't. He allowed it would frighten ye."

"*Frighten me!*" repeated Maggie contemptuously, nevertheless with her cheek paling again. "Frighten me — with what?"

"Well, since yer so cantankerous, look yer. We've been robbed!"

"Robbed?" echoed Maggie, facing him.

"Yes, robbed by that same deserter. Robbed of a suit of my clothes, and my whiskey-flask, and the darned skunk had 'em on. And if it had n't bin for that Leftenant Calvert, and my givin' him permission to hunt him over the Marsh, we would n't have caught him."

"Robbed?" repeated Maggie again, vaguely.

"Yes, robbed! Last night, afore we came home. He must hev got in yer while we was comin' from the boat."

"Did, did that Leftenant say so?" stammered Maggie.

"Say it, of course he did! and so do I," continued Jim, impatiently. "Why, there were my very clothes on his back, and he dare n't deny it. And if you'd hearkened to me jest now, instead of flyin' off in tantrums, you'd see that *that's* jest how we got him, and how me and the Leftenant joined hands in it. I did n't give him permission to hunt deserters, but *thieves*. I did n't help him to ketch the man that deserted from *him*, but the skunk that took *my* clothes. For when

the Leftenant found the man's old uniform in the bush, he nat'rally kalkilated he must hev got some other duds near by in some underhand way. Don't you see? eh? Why, look, Mag. Darned if you ain't skeered after all! Who'd hev thought it? There now — sit down, dear. Why, you're white ez a gull."

He had his arm round her as she sank back in the chair again with a forced smile.

"There now," he said with fraternal superiority, "don't mind it, Mag, any more. Why, it's all over now. You bet he won't trouble us agin, for the Leftenant sez that now he's found out to be a thief, they'll jest turn him over to the police, and he's sure o' getten six months' state prison fer stealin' and burglarin' in our house. But" — he stopped suddenly and looked at his sister's contracted face; "look yer, Mag, you're sick, that's what's the matter. Take suthin'" —

"I'm better now," she said with an effort; "it's only a kind o' blind chill I must hev got on the Marsh last night. What's that?"

She had risen, and grasping her brother's arm tightly had turned quickly to the window. The casement had suddenly rattled.

"It's only the wind gettin' up. It looked like a sou'wester when I came in. Lot o' scud flyin'. But *you* take some quinine, Mag. Don't *you* go now and get down sick like Maw."

Perhaps it was this well-meant but infelicitous reference that brought a moisture to her dark eyes, and caused her lips to momentarily quiver. But it gave way to a quick determined setting of her whole face as she turned it once more to the fire, and said, slowly :

"I reckon I'll sleep it off, if I go to bed now. What time does the tide fall."

"About three, unless this yer wind piles it up on the Marsh afore then. Why?"

"I was only wonderin' if the boat wus safe," said Maggie, rising.

"You 'd better hoist yourself outside some quinine, instead o' talken about those things," said Jim, who preferred to discharge his fraternal responsibility by active medication. "You are n't fit to read to-night."

"Good night, Jim," she said suddenly, stopping before him.

"Good night, Mag." He kissed her with protecting and amiable toleration, gener-

ously referring her hot hands and feverish lips to that vague mystery of feminine complaint which man admits without indorsing.

They separated. Jim, under the stimulus of the late supposed robbery, ostentatiously fastening the doors and windows with assuring comments, calculated to inspire confidence in his sister's startled heart. Then he went to bed. He lay awake long enough to be pleasantly conscious that the wind had increased to a gale, and to be lulled again to sleep by the cosy security of the heavily timbered and tightly sealed dwelling that seemed to ride the storm like the ship it resembled. The gale swept through the piles beneath him and along the gallery as through bared spars and over wave-washed decks. The whole structure, attacked above, below, and on all sides by the fury of the wind, seemed at times to be lifted in the air. Once or twice the creaking timbers simulated the sound of opening doors and passing footsteps, and again dilated as if the gale had forced a passage through. But Jim slept on peacefully, and was at last only aroused by the brilliant sunshine staring through his window from the clear wind-swept blue arch beyond.

Dressing himself lazily, he passed into the sitting-room and proceeded to knock at his sister's door, as was his custom ; he was amazed to find it open and the room empty. Entering hurriedly, he saw that her bed was undisturbed, as if it had not been occupied, and was the more bewildered to see a note ostentatiously pinned upon the pillow, addressed in pencil, in a large school-hand, "To Jim."

Opening it impatiently, he was startled to read as follows :—

"Don't be angry, Jim dear — but it was all my fault — and I did n't tell you. I knew all about the deserter, and I gave him the clothes and things that they say he stole. It was while you was out that night, and he came and begged of me, and was mournful and hidjus to behold. I thought I was helping him, and getting our revenge on the Fort, all at the same time. Don't be mad, Jim dear, and do not be frightened fer me. I'm going over thar to make it all right — to free *him* of stealing — to have *you* left out of it all — and take it all on myself. Don't you be a bit feared for me. I ain't skeert of the wind or of going. I'll close reef everything, clear the creek, stretch across to Injen Island, hugg the Point, and bear up fer Logport. Dear Jim — don't get mad — but I could n't

bear this fooling of you nor *him* — and that man being took for stealing any longer! — Your loving sister,
MAGGIE."

With a confused mingling of shame, anger, and sudden fear he ran out on the gallery. The tide was well up, half the Marsh had already vanished, and the little creek where he had moored his skiff was now an empty shining river. The water was everywhere — fringing the tussocks of salt grass with concentric curves of spume and drift, or tumultuously tossing its white-capped waves over the spreading expanse of the lower bay. The low thunder of breakers in the farther estuary broke monotonously on the ear. But his eye was fascinated by a dull shifting streak on the horizon, that, even as he gazed, shuddered, whitened along its whole line, and then grew ghastly gray again. It was the ocean bar.

IV.

"WELL, I must say," said Cicely Preston, emphasizing the usual feminine imperative for perfectly gratuitous statement, as she pushed back her chair from the comman-

dant's breakfast table, "I *must* really say that I don't see anything particularly heroic in doing something wrong, lying about it just to get other folks into trouble, and then rushing off to do penance in a high wind and an open boat. But she's pretty, and wears a man's shirt and coat, and of course *that* settles anything. But why earrings and wet white stockings and slippers? And why that Gothic arch of front and a boy's hat? That's what I simply ask;" and the youngest daughter of Colonel Preston rose from the table, shook out the skirt of her pretty morning dress, and, placing her little thumbs in the belt of her smart waist, paused witheringly for a reply.

"You are most unfair, my child," returned Colonel Preston gravely. "Her giving food and clothes to a deserter may have been only an ordinary instinct of humanity towards a fellow-creature who appeared to be suffering, to say nothing of M'Caffrey's plausible tongue. But her periling her life to save him from an unjust accusation, and her desire to shield her brother's pride from ridicule, is altogether praiseworthy and extraordinary. And the moral influence of her kindness was strong

enough to make that scamp refuse to tell the plain truth that might implicate her in an indiscretion, though it saved him from state prison."

"He knew you would n't believe him if he had said the clothes were given to him," retorted Miss Cicely, "so I don't see where the moral influence comes in. As to her periling her life, those Marsh people are amphibious anyway, or would be in those clothes. And as to her motive, why, papa, I heard you say in this very room, and afterwards to Mr. Calvert, when you gave him instructions, that you believed those Culpeppers were capable of enticing away deserters; and you forget the fuss you had with her savage brother's lawyer about that water front, and how you said it was such people who kept up the irritation between the Civil and Federal power."

The colonel coughed hurriedly. It is the fate of all great organizers, military as well as civil, to occasionally suffer defeat in the family circle.

"The more reason," he said, soothingly, "why we should correct harsh judgments that spring from mere rumors. You should give yourself at least the chance of over-

coming your prejudices, my child. Remember, too, that she is now the guest of the Fort."

"And she chooses to stay with Mrs. Bromley! I'm sure it's quite enough for you and mamma to do duty — and Emily, who wants to know why Mr. Calvert raves so about her — without *my* going over there to stare."

Colonel Preston shook his head reproachfully, but eventually retired, leaving the field to the enemy. The enemy, a little pink in the cheeks, slightly tossed the delicate rings of its blonde crest, settled its skirts again at the piano, but after turning over the leaves of its music book, rose, and walked pettishly to the window.

But here a spectacle presented itself that for a moment dismissed all other thoughts from the girl's rebellious mind.

Not a dozen yards away, on the wind-swept parade, a handsome young fellow, apparently halted by the sentry, had impetuously turned upon him in an attitude of indignant and haughty surprise. To the quick fancy of the girl it seemed as if some disguised rustic god had been startled by the challenge of a mortal. Under an oilskin hat, like the *petasus*

of Hermes, pushed back from his white forehead, crisp black curls were knotted around a head whose beardless face was perfect as a cameo cutting. In the close-fitting blue woolen jersey under his open jacket the clear outlines and youthful grace of his upper figure were revealed as clearly as in a statue. Long fishing-boots reaching to his thighs scarcely concealed the symmetry of his lower limbs. Cricket and lawn-tennis, knickerbockers and flannels had not at that period familiarized the female eye to unfettered masculine outline, and Cicely Preston, accustomed to the artificial smartness and regularity of uniform, was perhaps the more impressed by the stranger's lawless grace.

The sentry had repeated his challenge ; an angry flush was deepening on the intruder's cheek. At this critical moment Cicely threw open the French windows and stepped upon the veranda.

The sentry saluted the familiar little figure of his colonel's daughter with an explanatory glance at the stranger. The young fellow looked up — and the god became human.

"I'm looking for my sister," he said, half awkwardly, half defiantly ; "she's here, somewhere."

"Yes — and perfectly safe, Mr. Culpepper, I think," said the arch-hypocrite with dazzling sweetness; "and we're all so delighted. And so brave and plucky and skillful in her to come all that way — and for such a purpose."

"Then — you know — all about it" — stammered Jim, more relieved than he had imagined — "and that I" —

"That you were quite ignorant of your sister helping the deserter. Oh yes, of course," said Cicely, with bewildering promptitude. "You see, Mr. Culpepper, we girls are so foolish. I dare say *I* should have done the same thing in her place, only *I* should never have had the courage to do what she did afterwards. You really must forgive her. But won't you come in — *do*." She stepped back, holding the window open with the half-coaxing air of a spoiled child. "This way is quickest. *Do* come." As he still hesitated, glancing from her to the house, she added, with a demure little laugh, "Oh, I forget — this is Colonel Preston's quarters, and I'm his daughter."

And this dainty little fairy, so natural in manner, so tasteful in attire, was one of the artificial over-dressed creatures that his sister

had inveighed against so bitterly! Was Maggie really to be trusted? This new revelation coming so soon after the episode of the deserter staggered him. Nevertheless he hesitated, looking up with a certain boyish timidity into Cicely's dangerous eyes.

"Is — is — my sister there?"

"I'm expecting her with my mother every moment," responded this youthful but ingenious diplomatist sweetly; "she might be here now; but," she added with a sudden heart-broken flash of sympathy, "I know *how* anxious you both must be. *I'll* take you to her now. Only one moment, please." The opportunity of leading this handsome savage as it were in chains across the parade, before everybody, her father, her mother, her sister, and *his* — was not to be lost. She darted into the house, and reappeared with the daintiest imaginable straw hat on the side of her head, and demurely took her place at his side. "It's only over there, at Major Bromley's," she said, pointing to one of the vine-clad cottage quarters; but you are a stranger here, you know, and might get lost."

Alas! he was already that. For keeping

step with those fairy-like slippers, brushing awkwardly against that fresh and pretty skirt, and feeling the caress of the soft folds; looking down upon the brim of that beribboned little hat, and more often meeting the upturned blue eyes beneath it, Jim was suddenly struck with a terrible conviction of his own contrasting coarseness and deficiencies. How hideous those oiled canvas fishing-trousers and pilot jacket looked beside this perfectly fitted and delicately gowned girl! He loathed his collar, his jersey, his turned-back sou'wester, even his height, which seemed to hulk beside her — everything, in short, that the girl had recently admired. By the time that they had reached Major Bromley's door he had so far succumbed to the fair enchantress and realized her ambition of a triumphant procession, that when she ushered him into the presence of half a dozen ladies and gentlemen he scarcely recognized his sister as the centre of attraction, or knew that Miss Cicely's effusive greeting of Maggie was her first one. "I knew he was dying to see you after all you had *both* passed through, and I brought him straight here," said the diminutive Machiavelli, meeting the astonished gaze of her father and the

curious eyes of her sister with perfect calmness, while Maggie, full of gratitude and admiration of her handsome brother, forgot his momentary obliviousness, and returned her greeting warmly. Nevertheless, there was a slight movement of reserve among the gentlemen at the unlooked-for irruption of this sunburnt Adonis, until Calvert, disengaging himself from Maggie's side, came forward with his usual frank imperturbability and quiet tact, and claimed Jim as his friend and honored guest.

It then came out with that unostentatious simplicity which characterized the brother and sister, and was their secure claim to perfect equality with their entertainers, that Jim, on discovering his sister's absence, and fearing that she might be carried by the current towards the bar, had actually *swum the estuary* to Indian Island, and in an ordinary Indian canoe had braved the same tempestuous passage she had taken a few hours before. Cicely, listening to this recital with rapt attention, nevertheless managed to convey the impression of having fully expected it from the first. "Of course he'd have come here; if she'd only waited," she said, *sotto voce*, to her sister Emily.

"He's certainly the handsomer of the two," responded that young lady.

"Of course," returned Cicely, with a superior air, "don't you see she *copies* him."

Not that this private criticism prevented either from vying with the younger officers in their attentions to Maggie, with perhaps the addition of an open eulogy of her handsome brother, more or less invidious in comparison to the officers. "I suppose it's an active out-of-door life gives him that perfect grace and freedom," said Emily, with a slight sneer at the smartly belted Calvert. "Yes; and he don't drink or keep late hours," responded Cicely significantly. "His sister says they always retire before ten o'clock, and that although his father left him some valuable whiskey he seldom takes a drop of it." "Therein," gravely concluded Captain Kirby, "lies *our* salvation. If, after such a confession, Calvert does n't make the most of his acquaintance with young Culpepper to remove that whiskey from his path and bring it here, he's not the man I take him for."

Indeed, for the moment it seemed as if he was not. During the next three or four days, in which Colonel Preston had insisted

upon detaining his guests, Calvert touched no liquor, evaded the evening poker parties at quarters, and even prevailed upon some of his brother officers to give them up for the more general entertainment of the ladies. Colonel Preston was politician enough to avail himself of the popularity of Maggie's adventure to invite some of the Logport people to assist him in honoring their neighbor. Not only was the old feud between the Fort and the people thus bridged over, but there was no doubt that the discipline of the Fort had been strengthened by Maggie's extravagant reputation as a mediator among the disaffected rank and file. Whatever characteristic license the grateful Dennis M'Cafrey — let off with a nominal punishment — may have taken in his praise of the "Quane of the Marshes," it is certain that the men worshiped her, and that the band pathetically begged permission to serenade her the last night of her stay.

At the end of that time, with a dozen invitations, a dozen appointments, a dozen vows of eternal friendship, much hand-shaking, and accompanied by a number of the officers to their boat, Maggie and Jim departed. They talked but little on their way home ;

by some tacit understanding they did not discuss those projects, only recalling certain scenes and incidents of their visit. By the time they had reached the little creek the silence and nervous apathy which usually follow excitement in the young seemed to have fallen upon them. It was not until after their quiet frugal supper that, seated beside the fire, Jim looked up somewhat self-consciously in his sister's grave and thoughtful face.

"Say, Mag, what was that idea o' yours about selling some land, and taking a house at Logport?"

Maggie looked up, and said passively, "Oh, *that* idea?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Well," said Jim somewhat awkwardly, "it *could* be done, you know. I'm willin'."

As she did not immediately reply, he continued uneasily, "Miss Preston says we kin get a nice little house that is near the Fort, until we want to build."

"Oh, then you *have* talked about it?"

"Yes—that is—why, what are ye thinkin' of, Mag? Was n't it *your* idea all along?" he said, suddenly facing her with querulous

embarrassment. They had been sitting in their usual evening attitudes of Assyrian frieze profile, with even more than the usual Assyrian frieze similarity of feature.

"Yes; but, Jim dear, do you think it the best thing for — for us to do?" said Maggie, with half-frightened gravity.

At this sudden and startling exhibition of female inconsistency and inconsequence, Jim was for a moment speechless. Then he recovered himself, volubly, aggrievedly, and on his legs. What *did* she mean? Was he to give up understanding girls — or was it their sole vocation in life to impede masculine processes and shipwreck masculine conclusions? Here, after all she said the other night, after they had nearly "quo'll'd" over her "set idees," after she'd "gone over all that foolishness about Jael and Sisera — and there was n't any use for it — after she'd let him run on to them officers all he was goin' to do — nay, after *she* herself, for he had heard her, had talked to Calvert about it, she wanted to know *now* if it was best." He looked at the floor and the ceiling, as if expecting the tongued and grooved planks to cry out at this crowning enormity.

The cause of it had resumed her sad gaze

at the fire. Presently, without turning her head, she reached up her long, graceful arm, and clasping her brother's neck, brought his face down in profile with her own, cheek against cheek, until they looked like the double outlines of a medallion. Then she said — to the fire :

"Jim, do you think she 's pretty?"

"Who?" said Jim, albeit his color had already answered the question.

"You know *who*. Do you like her?"

Jim here vaguely murmured to the fire that he thought her "kinder nice," and that she dressed mighty purty. "Ye know, Mag," he said with patronizing effusion, "you oughter get some gownds like hers."

"That would n't make me like her," said Maggie gravely.

"I don't know about that," said Jim politely, but with an appalling hopelessness of tone. After a pause he added slyly, "'Pears to me *somebody else* thought somebody else mighty purty — eh?"

To his discomfiture she did not solicit further information. After a pause he continued, still more archly :

"Do you like *him*, Mag?"

"I think he's a perfect gentleman," she said calmly.

He turned his eyes quickly from the glowing fire to her face. The cheek that had been resting against his own was as cool as the night wind that came through the open door, and the whole face was as fixed and tranquil as the upper stars.

V.

FOR a year the tide had ebbed and flowed on the Dedlow Marsh unheeded before the sealed and sightless windows of the "Kingfisher's Nest." Since the young birds had flown to Logport, even the Indian caretakers had abandoned the piled dwelling for their old nomadic haunts in the "bresh." The high spring tide had again made its annual visit to the little cemetery of drift-wood, and, as if recognizing another wreck in the deserted home, had hung a few memorial offerings on the blackened piles, softly laid a garland of grayish drift before it, and then sobbed itself out in the salt grass.

From time to time the faint echoes of the Culpeppers' life at Logport reached the upland, and the few neighbors who had only known them by hearsay shook their heads

over the extravagance they as yet only knew by report. But it was in the dead ebb of the tide and the waning daylight that the feathered tenants of the Marsh seemed to voice dismal prophecies of the ruin of their old master and mistress, and to give themselves up to gloomiest lamentation and querulous foreboding. Whether the traditional "bird of the air" had entrusted his secret to a few ornithological friends, or whether from a natural disposition to take gloomy views of life, it was certain that at this hour the vocal expression of the Marsh was hopeless and despairing. It was then that a dejected plover, addressing a mocking crew of sandpipers on a floating log, seemed to bewail the fortune that was being swallowed up by the riotous living and gambling debts of Jim. It was then that the querulous crane rose, and testily protested against the selling of his favorite haunt in the sandy peninsula, which only six months of Jim's excesses had made imperative. It was then that a mournful curlew, who, with the preface that he had always been really expecting it, reiterated the story that Jim had been seen more than once staggering home with nervous hands and sodden features from a debauch with the

younger officers ; it was the same desponding fowl who knew that Maggie's eyes had more than once filled with tears at Jim's failings, and had already grown more hollow with many watchings. It was a flock of wrangling teal that screamingly discussed the small scandals, jealous heart-burnings, and curious backbitings that had attended Maggie's advent into society. It was the high-flying brent who, knowing how the sensitive girl, made keenly conscious at every turn of her defective training and ingenuous ignorance, had often watched their evening flight with longing gaze, now "honked" dismally at the recollection. It was at this hour and season that the usual vague lamentings of Dedlow Marsh seemed to find at last a preordained expression. And it was at such a time, when light and water were both fading, and the blackness of the Marsh was once more reasserting itself, that a small boat was creeping along one of the tortuous inlets, at times half hiding behind the bank like a wounded bird. As it slowly penetrated inland it seemed to be impelled by its solitary occupant in a hesitating uncertain way, as if to escape observation rather than as if directed to any positive bourn. Stop-

ping beside a bank of reeds at last, the figure rose stoopingly, and drew a gun from between its feet and the bottom of the boat. As the light fell upon its face, it could be seen that it was James Culpepper! James Culpepper! hardly recognizable in the swollen features, bloodshot eyes, and tremulous hands of that ruined figure! James Culpepper, only retaining a single trace of his former self in his look of set and passionate purpose! And that purpose was to kill himself — to be found dead, as his father had been before him — in an open boat, adrift upon the Marsh!

It was not the outcome of a sudden fancy. The idea had first come to him in a taunting allusion from the drunken lips of one of his ruder companions, for which he had stricken the offender to the earth. It had since haunted his waking hours of remorse and hopeless fatuity; it had seemed to be the one relief and atonement he could make his devoted sister; and, more fatuous than all, it seemed to the miserable boy the one revenge he would take upon the faithless coquette, who for a year had played with his simplicity, and had helped to drive him to the distraction of cards and drink. Only

that morning Colonel Preston had forbidden him the house ; and now it seemed to him the end had come. He raised his distorted face above the reedy bank for a last tremulous and half-frightened glance at the landscape he was leaving forever. A glint in the western sky lit up the front of his deserted dwelling in the distance, abreast of which the windings of the inlet had unwittingly led him. As he looked he started, and involuntarily dropped into a crouching attitude. For, to his superstitious terror, the sealed windows of his old home were open, the bright panes were glittering with the fading light, and on the outer gallery the familiar figure of his sister stood, as of old, awaiting his return ! Was he really going mad, or had this last vision of his former youth been purposely vouchsafed him ?

But, even as he gazed, the appearance of another figure in the landscape beyond the house proved the reality of his vision, and as suddenly distracted him from all else. For it was the apparition of a man on horseback approaching the house from the upland ; and even at that distance he recognized its well-known outlines. It was Calvert ! Calvert the traitor ! Calvert, the man whom

he had long suspected as being the secret lover and destined husband of Cicely Preston! Calvert, who had deceived him with his calm equanimity and his affected preference for Maggie, to conceal his deliberate understanding with Cicely. What was he doing here? Was he a double traitor, and now trying to deceive *her* — as he had him? And Maggie here! This sudden return — this preconcerted meeting. It was infamy!

For a moment he remained stupefied, and then, with a mechanical instinct, plunged his head and face in the lazy-flowing water, and then once again rose cool and collected. The half-mad distraction of his previous resolve had given way to another, more deliberate, but not less desperate determination. He knew now *why* he came there — *why* he had brought his gun — why his boat had stopped when it did!

Lying flat in the bottom, he tore away fragments of the crumbling bank to fill his frail craft, until he had sunk it to the gunwale, and below the low level of the Marsh. Then, using his hands as noiseless paddles, he propelled this rude imitation of a floating log slowly past the line of vision, until the tongue of bushes had hidden him from

view. With a rapid glance at the darkening flat, he then seized his gun, and springing to the spongy bank, half crouching half crawling through reeds and tussocks, he made his way to the brush. A foot and eye less experienced would have plunged its owner helpless in the black quagmire. At one edge of the thicket he heard hoofs trampling the dried twigs. Calvert's horse was already there, tied to a skirting alder.

He ran to the house, but, instead of attracting attention by ascending the creaking steps, made his way to the piles below the rear gallery and climbed to it noiselessly. It was the spot where the deserter had ascended a year ago, and, like him, he could see and hear all that passed distinctly. Calvert stood near the open door as if departing. Maggie stood between him and the window, her face in shadow, her hands clasped tightly behind her. A profound sadness, partly of the dying day and waning light, and partly of some vague expiration of their own sorrow, seemed to encompass them. Without knowing why, a strange trembling took the place of James Culpepper's fierce determination, and a film of moisture stole across his staring eyes.

“When I tell you that I believe all this will pass, and that you will still win your brother back to you,” said Calvert’s sad but clear voice, “I will tell you why — although, perhaps, it is only a part of that confidence you command me to withhold. When I first saw you, I myself had fallen into like dissolute habits; less excusable than he, for I had some experience of the world and its follies. When I met *you*, and fell under the influence of your pure, simple, and healthy life; when I saw that isolation, monotony, misunderstanding, even the sense of superiority to one’s surroundings could be lived down and triumphed over, without vulgar distractions or pitiful ambitions; when I learned to love you — hear me out, Miss Culpepper, I beg you — you saved *me* — I, who was nothing to you, even as I honestly believe you will still save your brother, whom you love.”

“How do you know I did n’t *ruin* him?” she said, turning upon him bitterly. “How do you know that it was n’t to get rid of *our* monotony, *our* solitude that I drove him to this vulgar distraction, this pitiful — yes, you were right — pitiful ambition?”

“Because it is n’t your real nature,” he said quietly.

"My real nature," she repeated with a half savage vehemence that seemed to be goaded from her by his very gentleness, "my real nature! What did *he* — what do *you* know of it? — My real nature! — I'll tell you what it was," she went on passionately. "It was to be revenged on you all for your cruelty, your heartlessness, your wickedness to me and mine in the past. It was to pay you off for your slanders of my dead father — for the selfishness that left me and Jim alone with his dead body on the Marsh. That was what sent me to Logport — to get even with you — to — to fool and flaunt you! There, you have it now! And now that God has punished me for it by crushing my brother — you — you expect me to let you crush *me* too."

"But," he said eagerly, advancing toward her, "you are wronging me — you are wronging yourself, cruelly."

"Stop," she said, stepping back, with her hands still locked behind her. "Stay where you are. There! That's enough!" She drew herself up and let her hands fall at her side. "Now, let us speak of Jim," she said coldly.

Without seeming to hear her, he regarded her for the first time with hopeless sadness.

"Why did you let my brother believe you were his rival with Cicely Preston?" she asked impatiently.

"Because I could not undeceive him without telling him I hopelessly loved his sister. You are proud, Miss Culpepper," he said, with the first tinge of bitterness in his even voice. "Can you not understand that others may be proud too?"

"No," she said bluntly; "it is not pride but weakness. You could have told him what you knew to be true: that there could be nothing in common between her folk and such savages as we; that there was a gulf as wide as that Marsh and as black between our natures, our training and theirs, and even if they came to us across it, now and then, to suit their pleasure, light and easy as that tide — it was still there to some day ground and swamp them! And if he doubted it, you had only to tell him your own story. You had only to tell him what you have just told me — that you yourself, an officer and a gentleman, thought you loved me, a vulgar, uneducated, savage girl, and that I, kinder to you than you to me or him, made you take it back across that tide, because I could n't let you link your life with me, and drag you in the mire."

"You need not have said that, Miss Culpepper," returned Calvert with the same gentle smile, "to prove that I am your inferior in all but one thing."

"And that?" she said quickly.

"Is my love."

His gentle face was as set now as her own as he moved back slowly towards the door. There he paused.

"You tell me to speak of Jim, and Jim only. Then hear me. I believe that Miss Preston cares for him as far as lies in her young and giddy nature. I could not, therefore, have crushed *his* hope without deceiving him, for there are as cruel deceits prompted by what we call reason as by our love. If you think that a knowledge of this plain truth would help to save him, I beg you to be kinder to him than you have been to me,—or even, let me dare to hope, to *yourself*."

He slowly crossed the threshold, still holding his cap lightly in his hand.

"When I tell you that I am going away to-morrow on a leave of absence, and that in all probability we may not meet again, you will not misunderstand why I add my prayer to the message your friends in Logport

charged me with. They beg that you will give up your idea of returning here, and come back to them. Believe me, you have made yourself loved and respected there, in spite — I beg pardon — perhaps I should say *because* of your pride. Good-night and good-bye.”

For a single instant she turned her set face to the window with a sudden convulsive movement, as if she would have called him back, but at the same moment the opposite door creaked and her brother slipped into the room. Whether a quick memory of the deserter's entrance at that door a year ago had crossed her mind, whether there was some strange suggestion in his mud-stained garments and weak deprecating smile, or whether it was the outcome of some desperate struggle within her, there was that in her face that changed his smile into a frightened cry for pardon, as he ran and fell on his knees at her feet. But even as he did so her stern look vanished, and with her arm around him she bent over him and mingled her tears with his.

“I heard it all, Mag dearest! All! Forgive me! I have been crazy! — wild! — I will reform! — I will be better! I will

never disgrace you again, Mag! Never, never! I swear it!"

She reached down and kissed him. After a pause, a weak boyish smile struggled into his face.

"You heard what he said of *her*, Mag. Do you think it might be true?"

She lifted the damp curls from his forehead with a sad half-maternal smile, but did not reply.

"And Mag, dear, don't you think *you* were a little — just a little — hard on *him*? No! Don't look at me that way, for God's sake! There, I did n't mean anything. Of course you knew best. There, Maggie dear, look up. Hark there! Listen, Mag, do!"

They lifted their eyes to the dim distance seen through the open door. Borne on the fading light, and seeming to fall and die with it over marsh and river, came the last notes of the bugle from the Fort.

"There! Don't you remember what you used to say, Mag?"

The look that had frightened him had quite left her face now.

"Yes," she smiled, laying her cold cheek beside his softly. "Oh yes! It was something that came and went, 'Like a song' — 'Like a song.'"

A KNIGHT-ERRANT OF THE FOOT- HILLS.



I.

As Father Felipe slowly toiled up the dusty road towards the Rancho of the Blessed Innocents, he more than once stopped under the shadow of a sycamore to rest his somewhat lazy mule and to compose his own perplexed thoughts by a few snatches from his breviary. For the good padre had some reason to be troubled. The invasion of Gentile Americans that followed the gold discovery of three years before had not confined itself to the plains of the Sacramento, but stragglers had already found their way to the Santa Cruz Valley, and the seclusion of even the mission itself was threatened. It was true that they had not brought their heathen engines to disembowel the earth in search of gold, but it was rumored that they had already speculated upon the agricultural productiveness of the land, and had espied

"the fatness thereof." As he reached the higher plateau he could see the afternoon sea-fog — presently to obliterate the fair prospect — already pulling through the gaps in the Coast Range, and on a nearer slope — no less ominously — the smoke of a recent but more permanently destructive Yankee saw-mill was slowly drifting towards the valley.

"Get up, beast!" said the father, digging his heels into the comfortable flanks of his mule with some human impatience, "or art *thou*, too, a lazy renegade? Thinkest thou, besotted one, that the heretic will spare thee more work than the Holy Church."

The mule, thus apostrophized in ear and flesh, shook its head obstinately as if the question was by no means clear to its mind, but nevertheless started into a little trot, which presently brought it to the low adobe wall of the courtyard of "The Innocents," and entered the gate. A few lounging *peons* in the shadow of an archway took off their broad-brimmed hats and made way for the padre, and a half dozen equally listless *vaqueros* helped him to alight. Accustomed as he was to the indolence and superfluity of his host's retainers, to-day it nevertheless

seemed to strike some note of irritation in his breast.

A stout, middle-aged woman of ungirt waist and beshawled head and shoulders appeared at the gateway as if awaiting him. After a formal salutation she drew him aside into an inner passage.

"He is away again, your Reverence," she said.

"Ah — always the same?"

"Yes, your Reverence — and this time to 'a meeting' of the heretics at their *pueblo*, at Jonesville — where they will ask him of his land for a road."

"At a *meeting*?" echoed the priest uneasily.

"Ah yes! a meeting — where Tiburcio says they shout and spit on the ground, your Reverence, and only one has a chair and him they call a 'chairman' because of it, and yet he sits not but shouts and spits even as the others and keeps up a tapping with a hammer like a very *pico*. And there it is they are ever 'resolving' that which is not, and consider it even as done."

"Then he is still the same," said the priest gloomily, as the woman paused for breath.

"Only more so, your Reverence, for he reads nought but the newspaper of the *Americanos* that is brought in the ship, the 'New York 'errald' — and recites to himself the orations of their legislators. Ah! it was an evil day when the shipwrecked American sailor taught him his uncouth tongue, which, as your Reverence knows, is only fit for beasts and heathen incantation."

"Pray Heaven *that* were all he learned of him," said the priest hastily, "for I have great fear that this sailor was little better than an atheist and an emissary from Satan. But where are these newspapers and the fantasies of *publicita* that fill his mind? I would see them, my daughter."

"You shall, your Reverence, and more too," she replied eagerly, leading the way along the passage to a grated door which opened upon a small cell-like apartment, whose scant light and less air came through the deeply embayed windows in the outer wall. "Here is his *estudio*."

In spite of this open invitation, the padre entered with that air of furtive and minute inspection common to his order. His glance fell upon a rude surveyor's plan of the adjacent embryo town of Jonesville hanging on

the wall, which he contemplated with a cold disfavor that even included the highly colored vignette of the projected Jonesville Hotel in the left-hand corner. He then passed to a supervisor's notice hanging near it, which he examined with a suspicion heightened by that uneasiness common to mere worldly humanity when opposed to an unknown and unfamiliar language. But an exclamation broke from his lips when he confronted an election placard immediately below it. It was printed in Spanish and English, and Father Felipe had no difficulty in reading the announcement that "Don José Sepulvida would preside at a meeting of the Board of Education in Jonesville as one of the trustees."

"This is madness," said the padre.

Observing that Dona Maria was at the moment preoccupied in examining the pictorial pages of an illustrated American weekly which had hitherto escaped his eyes, he took it gently from her hand.

"Pardon, your Reverence," she said with slightly acidulous deprecation, "but thanks to the Blessed Virgin and your Reverence's teaching, the text is but gibberish to me and I did but glance at the pictures."

"Much evil may come in with the eye," said the priest sententiously, "as I will presently show thee. We have here," he continued, pointing to an illustration of certain college athletic sports, "a number of youthful cavaliers posturing and capering in a partly nude condition before a number of shameless women, who emulate the saturnalia of heathen Rome by waving their handkerchiefs. We have here a companion picture," he said, indicating an illustration of gymnastic exercises by the students of a female academy at "Commencement," "in which, as thou seest, even the aged of both sexes unblushingly assist as spectators with every expression of immodest satisfaction."

"Have they no bull-fights or other seemly recreation that they must indulge in such wantonness?" asked Dona Maria indignantly, gazing, however, somewhat curiously at the baleful representations.

"Of all that, my daughter, has their pampered civilization long since wearied," returned the good padre, "for see, this is what they consider a moral and even a religious ceremony." He turned to an illustration of a woman's rights convention; "observe with what rapt attention the audience of that

heathen temple watch the inspired ravings of that elderly priestess on the dais. It is even this kind of sacrilegious performance that I am told thy nephew Don José expounds and defends."

"May the blessed saints preserve us; where will it lead to?" murmured the horrified Dona Maria.

"I will show thee," said Father Felipe, briskly turning the pages with the same lofty ignoring of the text until he came to a representation of a labor procession. "There is one of their periodic revolutions unhappily not unknown even in Mexico. Thou perceivest those complacent artisans marching with implements of their craft, accompanied by the military, in the presence of their own stricken masters. Here we see only another instance of the instability of all communities that are not founded on the principles of the Holy Church."

"And what is to be done with my nephew?"

The good father's brow darkened with the gloomy religious zeal of two centuries ago. "We must have a council of the family, the alcalde, and the archbishop, at *once*," he said ominously. To the mere heretical observer

the conclusion might have seemed lame and impotent, but it was as near the Holy Inquisition as the year of grace 1852 could offer.

A few days after this colloquy the unsuspecting subject of it, Don José Sepulvida, was sitting alone in the same apartment. The fading glow of the western sky, through the deep embrasured windows, lit up his rapt and meditative face. He was a young man of apparently twenty-five, with a colorless satin complexion, dark eyes alternating between melancholy and restless energy, a narrow high forehead, long straight hair, and a lightly penciled moustache. He was said to resemble the well-known portrait of the Marquis of Monterey in the mission church, a face that was alleged to leave a deep and lasting impression upon the observers. It was undoubtedly owing to this quality during a brief visit of the famous viceroy to a remote and married ancestress of Don José at Leon that the singular resemblance may be attributed.

A heavy and hesitating step along the passage stopped before the grating. Looking up, Don José beheld to his astonishment the slightly inflamed face of Roberto, a vagabond

American whom he had lately taken into his employment.

Roberto, a polite translation of "Bob the Bucker," cleaned out at a monte-bank in Santa Cruz, penniless and profligate, had sold his mustang to Don José and recklessly thrown himself in with the bargain. Touched by the rascal's extravagance, the quality of the mare, and observing that Bob's habits had not yet affected his seat in the saddle, but rather lent a demoniac vigor to his chase of wild cattle, Don José had retained rider and horse in his service as *vaquero*.

Bucking Bob, observing that his employer was alone, coolly opened the door without ceremony, shut it softly behind him, and then closed the wooden shutter of the grating. Don José surveyed him with mild surprise and dignified composure. The man appeared perfectly sober, — it was a peculiarity of his dissipated habits that, when not actually raving with drink, he was singularly shrewd and practical.

"Look yer, Don Kosay," he began in a brusque but guarded voice, "you and me is pards. When ye picked me and the mare up and set us on our legs again in this yer ranch, I allowed I'd tie to ye whenever you

was in trouble — and wanted me. And I reckon that's what's the matter now. For from what I see and hear on every side, although you're the boss of this consarn, you're surrounded by a gang of spies and traitors. Your comings and goings, your ins and outs, is dogged and followed and blown upon. The folks you trust is playing it on ye. It ain't for me to say why or wherefore — what's their rights and what's yourn — but I've come to tell ye that if you don't get up and get outer this ranch them d——d priests and your own flesh and blood — your aunts and your uncles and your cousins, will have you chucked outer your property, and run into a lunatic asylum."

"Me — Don José Sepulvida — a lunatico! You are yourself crazy of drink, friend Roberto."

"Yes," said Roberto grimly, "but that kind ain't *illegal*, while your makin' ducks and drakes of your property and going into 'Merikin ideas and 'Merikin speculations they reckon is. And speakin' on the square, it ain't *nat'ral*."

Don José sprang to his feet and began to pace up and down his cell-like study. "Ah, I remember now," he muttered, "I begin to

comprehend: Father Felipe's homilies and discourses! My aunt's too affectionate care! My cousin's discreet consideration! The prompt attention of my servants! I see it all! And you," he said, suddenly facing Roberto, "why come you to tell me this?"

"Well, boss," said the American dryly, "I reckoned to stand by you."

"Ah," said Don José, visibly affected. "Good Roberto, come hither, child, you may kiss my hand."

"If! it's all the same to you, Don Kosay, — *that* kin slide."

"Ah, if — yes," said Don José, meditatively putting his hand to his forehead, "miserable that I am! — I remembered not you were *Americano*. Pardon, my friend — embrace me — *Compañero y Amigo*."

With characteristic gravity he reclined for a moment upon Robert's astonished breast. Then recovering himself with equal gravity he paused, lifted his hand with gentle warning, marched to a recess in the corner, unhooked a rapier hanging from the wall, and turned to his companion.

"We will defend ourselves, friend Roberto. It is the sword of the *Comandante* — my ancestor. The blade is of Toledo."

"An ordinary six-shooter of Colt's would lay over that," said Roberto grimly — "but that ain't your game just now, Don Kosay. You must get up and get, and at once. You must *vamosé* the ranch afore they lay hold of you and have you up before the alcalde. Once away from here, they dare n't follow you where there's 'Merikin law, and when you kin fight 'em in the square."

"Good," said Don José with melancholy preciseness. "You are wise, friend Roberto. We may fight them later, as you say — on the square, or in the open Plaza. And you, *camarado*, you shall go with me — you and your mare."

Sincere as the American had been in his offer of service, he was somewhat staggered at this imperative command. But only for a moment. "Well," he said lazily, "I don't care if I do."

"But," said Don José with increased gravity, "you *shall* care, friend Roberto. We shall make an alliance, an union. It is true, my brother, you drink of whiskey, and at such times are even as a madman. It has been recounted to me that it was necessary to your existence that you are a lunatic three days of the week. Who knows? I myself,

though I drink not of *aguardiente*, am accused of fantasies for all time. Necessary it becomes therefore that we should go *together*. My fantasies and speculations cannot injure you, my brother; your whiskey shall not empoison me. We shall go together in the great world of your American ideas of which I am much inflamed. We shall together breathe as one the spirit of Progress and Liberty. We shall be even as neophytes making of ourselves Apostles of Truth. I absolve and renounce myself henceforth of my family. I shall take to myself the sister and the brother, the aunt and the uncle, as we proceed. I devote myself to humanity alone. I devote *you*, my friend, and the mare — though happily she has not a Christian soul — to this glorious mission."

The few level last rays of light lit up a faint enthusiasm in the face of Don José, but without altering his imperturbable gravity. The *vaquero* eyed him curiously and half-doubtfully.

"We will go to-morrow," resumed Don José with solemn decision, "for it is Wednesday. It was a Sunday that thou didst ride the mare up the steps of the Fonda and de-

manded that thy liquor should be served to thee in a pail. I remember it, for the landlord of the Fonda claimed twenty *pesos* for damage and the kissing of his wife. Therefore, by computation, good Roberto, thou shouldst be sober until Friday, and we shall have two clear days to fly before thy madness again seizes thee."

"They kin say what they like, Don Kossay, but *your* head is level," returned the unabashed American, grasping Don José's hand. "All right, then. *Hasta mañana*, as your folks say."

"*Hasta mañana*," repeated Don José gravely.

At daybreak next morning, while slumber still weighted the lazy eyelids of "the Blessed Innocents," Don José Sepulvida and his trusty squire Roberto, otherwise known as "Bucking Bob," rode forth unnoticed from the corral.

II.

THREE days had passed. At the close of the third, Don José was seated in a cosy private apartment of the San Mateo Hotel, where they had halted for an arranged inter-

view with his lawyer before reaching San Francisco. From his window he could see the surrounding park-like avenues of oaks and the level white high road, now and then clouded with the dust of passing teams. But his eyes were persistently fixed upon a small copy of the American Constitution before him. Suddenly there was a quick rap on his door, and before he could reply to it a man brusquely entered.

Don José raised his head slowly, and recognized the landlord. But the intruder, apparently awed by the gentle, grave, and studious figure before him, fell back for an instant in an attitude of surly apology.

"Enter freely, my good Jenkinson," said Don José, with a quiet courtesy that had all the effect of irony. "The apartment, such as it is, is at your disposition. It is even yours, as is the house."

"Well, I'm darned if I know as it is," said the landlord, recovering himself roughly, "and that's jest what's the matter. Yer's that man of yours smashing things right and left in the bar-room and chuckin' my waiters through the window."

"Softly, softly, good Jenkinson," said Don José, putting a mark in the pages of

the volume before him. "It is necessary first that I should correct your speech. He is not my '*man*,' which I comprehend to mean a slave, a hireling, a thing obnoxious to the great American nation which *I* admire and to which *he* belongs. Therefore, good Jenkinson, say 'friend,' 'companion,' 'guide,' 'philosopher,' if you will. As to the rest, it is of no doubt as you relate. I myself have heard the breakings of glass and small dishes as I sit here; three times I have seen your waiters projected into the road with much violence and confusion. To myself I have then said, even as I say to you, good Jenkinson, 'Patience, patience, the end is not far.' In four hours," continued Don José, holding up four fingers, "he shall make a finish. Until then, not."

"Well, I'm d——d," ejaculated Jenkinson, gasping for breath in his indignation.

"Nay, excellent Jenkinson, not dam-ned but of a possibility dam-*aged*. That I shall repay when he have make a finish."

"But, darn it all," broke in the landlord angrily.

"Ah," said Don José gravely, "you would be paid before! Good; for how much shall you value *all* you have in your bar?"

Don José's imperturbability evidently shook the landlord's faith in the soundness of his own position. He looked at his guest critically and audaciously.

"It cost me two hundred dollars to fit it up," he said curtly.

Don José rose, and, taking a buckskin purse from his saddle-bag, counted out four slugs¹ and handed them to the stupefied Jenkinson. The next moment, however, his host recovered himself, and casting the slugs back on the little table, brought his fist down with an emphasis that made them dance.

"But, look yer — suppose I want this thing stopped — you hear me — *stopped* — now."

"That would be interfering with the liberty of the subject, my good Jenkinson — which God forbid!" said Don José calmly. "Moreover, it is the custom of the *Americanos* — a habit of my friend Roberto — a necessity of his existence — and so recognized of his friends. Patience and courage, Señor Jenkinson. Stay — ah, I comprehend! you have — of a possibility — a wife?"

¹ Hexagonal gold pieces valued at \$50 each, issued by a private firm as coin in the early days.

"No, I 'm a widower," said Jenkinson sharply.

"Then I congratulate you. My friend Roberto would have kissed her. It is also of his habit. Truly you have escaped much. I embrace you, Jenkinson."

He threw his arms gravely around Jenkinson, in whose astounded face at last an expression of dry humor faintly dawned. After a moment's survey of Don José's impenetrable gravity, he coolly gathered up the gold coins, and saying that he would assess the damages and return the difference, he left the room as abruptly as he had entered it.

But Don José was not destined to remain long in peaceful study of the American Constitution. He had barely taken up the book again and renewed his serious contemplation of its excellences when there was another knock at his door. This time, in obedience to his invitation to enter, the new visitor approached with more deliberation and a certain formality.

He was a young man of apparently the same age as Don José, handsomely dressed, and of a quiet self-possession and gravity almost equal to his host's.

"I believe I am addressing Don José

Sepulvida," he said with a familiar yet courteous inclination of his handsome head. Don José, who had risen in marked contrast to his reception of his former guest, answered, —

"You are truly making to him a great honor."

"Well, you're going it blind as far as *I'm* concerned certainly," said the young man, with a slight smile, "for you don't know *me*."

"Pardon, my friend," said Don José gently, "in this book, this great Testament of your glorious nation, I have read that you are all equal, one not above, one not below the other. I salute in you the Nation! It is enough!"

"Thank you," returned the stranger, with a face that, saving the faintest twinkle in the corner of his dark eyes, was as immovable as his host's, "but for the purposes of my business I had better say I am Jack Hamlin, a gambler, and am just now dealing faro in the Florida saloon round the corner."

He paused carelessly, as if to allow Don José the protest he did not make, and then continued, —

"The matter is this. One of your *vague*—

ros, who is, however, an American, was round there an hour ago bucking against faro, and put up and *lost*, not only the mare he was riding, but a horse which I have just learned is yours. Now we reckon, over there, that we can make enough money playing a square game, without being obliged to take property from a howling drunkard, to say nothing of it not belonging to him, and I've come here, Don José, to say that if you'll send over and bring away your man and your horse, you can have 'em both."

"If I have comprehended, honest Hamlin," said Don José slowly, "this Roberto, who was my *vaquero* and is my brother, has approached this faro game by himself unsolicited?"

"He certainly didn't seem shy of it," said Mr. Hamlin with equal gravity. "To the best of my knowledge he looked as if he'd been there before."

"And if he had won, excellent Hamlin, you would have given him the equal of his mare and horse?"

"A hundred dollars for each, yes, certainly."

"Then I see not why I should send for the property which is truly no longer mine,

nor for my brother who will amuse himself after the fashion of his country in the company of so honorable a *caballero* as yourself? Stay! oh imbecile that I am. I have not remembered. You would possibly say that he has no longer of horses! Play him; play him, admirable yet prudent Hamlin. I have two thousand horses! Of a surety he cannot exhaust them in four hours. Therefore play him, trust to me for *recompensa*, and have no fear."

A quick flush covered the stranger's cheek, and his eyebrows momentarily contracted. He walked carelessly to the window, however, glanced out, and then turned to Don José.

"May I ask, then," he said with almost sepulchral gravity, "is anybody taking care of you?"

"Truly," returned Don José cautiously, "there is my brother and friend Roberto."

"Ah! Roberto, certainly," said Mr. Hamlin profoundly.

"Why do you ask, considerate friend?"

"Oh! I only thought, with your kind of opinions, you must often feel lonely in California. Good-bye." He shook Don José's hand heartily, took up his hat, inclined his

head with graceful seriousness, and passed out of the room. In the hall he met the landlord.

"Well," said Jenkinson, with a smile half anxious, half insinuating, "you saw him? What do you think of him?"

Mr. Hamlin paused and regarded Jenkinson with a calmly contemplative air, as if he were trying to remember first who he was, and secondly why he should speak to him at all. "Think of whom?" he repeated carelessly.

"Why him — you know — Don José."

"I did not see anything the matter with him," returned Hamlin with frigid simplicity.

"What? nothing queer?"

"Well, no — except that he's a guest in *your* house," said Hamlin with great cheerfulness. "But then, as you keep a hotel, you can't help occasionally admitting a — gentleman."

Mr. Jenkinson smiled the uneasy smile of a man who knew that his interlocutor's playfulness occasionally extended to the use of a derringer, in which he was singularly prompt and proficient, and Mr. Hamlin, equally conscious of that knowledge on the part of

his companion, descended the staircase composedly.

But the day had darkened gradually into night, and Don José was at last compelled to put aside his volume. The sound of a large bell rung violently along the hall and passages admonished him that the American dinner was ready, and although the viands and the mode of cooking were not entirely to his fancy, he had, in his grave enthusiasm for the national habits, attended the *table d'hôte* regularly with Roberto. On reaching the lower hall he was informed that his henchman had early succumbed to the potency of his libations, and had already been carried by two men to bed. Receiving this information with his usual stoical composure, he entered the dining-room, but was surprised to find that a separate table had been prepared for him by the landlord, and that a rude attempt had been made to serve him with his own native dishes.

“Señores y Señoritas,” said Don José, turning from it and with grave politeness addressing the assembled company, “if I seem to-day to partake alone and in a reserved fashion of certain viands that have been prepared for me, it is truly from no lack of

courtesy to your distinguished company, but rather, I protest, to avoid the appearance of greater discourtesy to our excellent Jenkinson, who has taken some pains and trouble to comport his establishment to what he conceives to be my desires. Wherefore, my friends, in God's name fall to, the same as if I were not present, and grace be with you."

A few stared at the tall, gentle, melancholy figure with some astonishment; a few whispered to their neighbors; but when, at the conclusion of his repast, Don José arose and again saluted the company, one or two stood up and smilingly returned the courtesy, and Polly Jenkinson, the landlord's youngest daughter, to the great delight of her companions, blew him a kiss.

After visiting the *vaquero* in his room, and with his own hand applying some native ointment to the various contusions and scratches which recorded the late engagements of the unconscious Roberto, Don José placed a gold coin in the hands of the Irish chamber-maid, and bidding her look after the sleeper, he threw his *serape* over his shoulders and passed into the road. The loungers on the veranda gazed at him curiously, yet half acknowledged his usual se-

rious salutation, and made way for him with a certain respect. Avoiding the few narrow streets of the little town, he pursued his way meditatively along the highroad, returning to the hotel after an hour's ramble, as the evening stage-coach had deposited its passengers and departed.

"There's a lady waiting to see you upstairs," said the landlord with a peculiar smile. "She rather allowed it was n't the proper thing to see you alone, or she was n't quite *ekal* to it, I reckon, for she got my Polly to stand by her."

"Your Polly, good Jenkinson?" said Don José interrogatively.

"My darter, Don José."

"Ah, truly! I am twice blessed," said Don José, gravely ascending the staircase.

On entering the room he perceived a tall, large-featured woman with an extraordinary quantity of blond hair parted on one side of her broad forehead, sitting upon the sofa. Beside her sat Polly Jenkinson, her fresh, honest, and rather pretty face beaming with delighted expectation and mischief. Don José saluted them with a formal courtesy, which, however, had no trace of the fact that he really did not remember anything of them.

"I called," said the large-featured woman with a voice equally pronounced, "in reference to a request from you, which, though perhaps unconventional in the extreme, I have been able to meet by the intervention of this young lady's company. My name on this card may not be familiar to you — but I am 'Dorothy Dewdrop.'"

A slight movement of abstraction and surprise passed over Don José's face, but as quickly vanished as he advanced towards her and gracefully raised the tips of her fingers to his lips. "Have I then, at last, the privilege of beholding that most distressed and deeply injured of women! Or is it but a dream!"

It certainly was not, as far as concerned the substantial person of the woman before him, who, however, seemed somewhat uneasy under his words as well as the demure scrutiny of Miss Jenkinson. "I thought you might have forgotten," she said with slight acerbity, "that you desired an interview with the authoress of" —

"Pardon," interrupted Don José, standing before her in an attitude of the deepest sympathizing dejection, "I had not forgotten. It is now three weeks since I have

read in the journal 'Golden Gate' the eloquent and touching poem of your sufferings, and your aspirations, and your miscomprehensions by those you love. I remember as yesterday that you have said, that cruel fate have linked you to a soulless state — that — but I speak not well your own beautiful language — you are in tears at evenfall 'because that you are not understood of others, and that your soul recoiled from iron bonds, until, as in a dream, you sought succor and release in some true Knight of equal plight.' "

"I am told," said the large-featured woman with some satisfaction, "that the poem to which you allude has been generally admired."

"Admired! Señora," said Don José, with still darker sympathy, "it is not the word; it is *felt*. I have felt it. When I read those words of distress, I am touched of compassion! I have said, This woman, so disconsolate, so oppressed, must be relieved, protected! I have wrote to you, at the 'Golden Gate,' to see me here."

"And I have come, as you perceive," said the poetess, rising with a slight smile of constraint; "and emboldened by your appreciation, I have brought a few trifles thrown off" —

“Pardon, unhappy Señora,” interrupted Don José, lifting his hand deprecatingly without relaxing his melancholy precision, “but to a cavalier further evidence is not required — and I have not yet make finish. I have not content myself to *write* to you. I have sent my trusty friend Roberto to inquire at the ‘Golden Gate’ of your condition. I have found there, most unhappy and persecuted friend — that with truly angelic forbearance you have not told *all* — that you are *married*, and that of a necessity it is your husband that is cold and soulless and unsympathizing — and all that you describe.”

“Sir!” said the poetess, rising in angry consternation.

“I have written to him,” continued Don José, with unheeding gravity; “have appealed to him as a friend, I have conjured him as a *caballero*, I have threatened him even as a champion of the Right, I have said to him, in effect — that this must not be as it is. I have informed him that I have made an appointment with you even at this house, and I challenged him to meet you here — in this room — even at this instant, and, with God’s help, we should make good

our charges against him. It is yet early; I have allowed time for the lateness of the stage and the fact that he will come by another conveyance. Therefore, O Dona Dew-drop, tremble not like thy namesake as it were on the leaf of apprehension and expectancy. I, Don José, am here to protect thee. I will take these charges" — gently withdrawing the manuscripts from her astonished grasp — "though even, as I related to thee before, I want them not, yet we will together confront him with them and make them good against him."

"Are you mad?" demanded the lady in almost stentorious accents, "or is this an unmanly hoax?" Suddenly she stopped in undeniable consternation. "Good heavens," she muttered, "if Abner should believe this. He is *such* a fool! He has lately been queer and jealous. Oh dear!" she said, turning to Polly Jenkinson with the first indication of feminine weakness, "*is* he telling the truth? is he crazy? what shall I do?"

Polly Jenkinson, who had witnessed the interview with the intensest enjoyment, now rose equal to the occasion.

"You have made a mistake," she said, uplifting her demure blue eyes to Don José's

dark and melancholy gaze. "This lady is a *poetess*! The sufferings she depicts, the sorrows she feels, are in the *imagination*, in her fancy only."

"Ah!" said Don José gloomily; "then it is all false."

"No," said Polly quickly, "only they are not her *own*, you know. They are somebody else's. She only describes them for another, don't you see?"

"And who, then, is this unhappy one?" asked the Don quickly.

"Well — a — friend," stammered Polly, hesitatingly.

"A friend!" repeated Don José. "Ah, I see, of possibility a dear one, even," he continued, gazing with tender melancholy into the untroubled cerulean depths of Polly's eyes, "even, but no, child, it could not be! *thou* art too young."

"Ah," said Polly, with an extraordinary gulp and a fierce nudge of the poetess, "but it *was* me."

"You, Señorita," repeated Don José, falling back in an attitude of mingled admiration and pity. "You, the child of Jenkinson!"

"Yes, yes," joined in the poetess hur-

riedly; "but that isn't going to stop the consequences of your wretched blunder. My husband will be furious, and will be here at any moment. Good gracious! what is that?"

The violent slamming of a distant door at that instant, the sounds of quick scuffling on the staircase, and the uplifting of an irate voice had reached her ears and thrown her back in the arms of Polly Jenkinson. Even the young girl herself turned an anxious gaze towards the door. Don José alone was unmoved.

"Possess yourselves in peace, Señoritas," he said calmly. "We have here only the characteristic convalescence of my friend and brother, the excellent Roberto. He will ever recover himself from drink with violence, even as he precipitates himself into it with fury. He has been prematurely awakened. I will discover the cause."

With an elaborate bow to the frightened women, he left the room. Scarcely had the door closed when the poetess turned quickly to Polly. "The man's a stark staring lunatic, but, thank Heaven, Abner will see it at once. And now let's get away while we can. To think," she said, snatching up her scattered manuscripts, "that *that* was all the beast wanted."

"I'm sure he's very gentle and kind," said Polly, recovering her dimples with a demure pout; "but stop, he's coming back."

It was indeed Don José re-entering the room with the composure of a relieved and self-satisfied mind. "It is even as I said, Señora," he began, taking the poetess's hand, — "and *more*. You are *saved*!"

As the women only stared at each other, he gravely folded his arms and continued: "I will explain. For the instant I have not remember that, in imitation of your own delicacy, I have given to your husband in my letter, not the name of myself, but, as a mere *Don Fulano*, the name of my brother Roberto — 'Bucking Bob.' Your husband have this moment arrive! Penetrating the bedroom of the excellent Roberto, he has indiscreetly seize him in his bed, without explanation, without introduction, without fear! The excellent Roberto, ever ready for such distractions, have respond! In a word, to use the language of the good Jenkinson — our host, our father — who was present, he have 'wiped the floor with your husband,' and have even carried him down the staircase to the street. Believe me, he will not return. You are free!"

"Fool! Idiot! Crazy beast!" said the poetess, dashing past him and out of the door. "You shall pay for this!"

Don José did not change his imperturbable and melancholy calm. "And now, little one," he said, dropping on one knee before the half-frightened Polly, "child of Jenkinson, now that thy perhaps too excitable sponsor has, in a poet's caprice, abandoned thee for some newer fantasy, confide in me thy distress, to me, thy Knight, and tell the story of thy sorrows."

"But," said Polly, rising to her feet and struggling between a laugh and a cry. "I haven't any sorrows. Oh dear! don't you see, it's only her *fancy* to make me seem so. There's nothing the matter with me."

"Nothing the matter," repeated Don José slowly. "You have no distress? You want no succor, no relief, no protector? This, then, is but another delusion!" he said, rising sadly.

"Yes, no — that is — oh, my gracious goodness!" said Polly, hopelessly divided between a sense of the ridiculous and some strange attraction in the dark, gentle eyes that were fixed upon her half reproachfully. "You don't understand."

Don José replied only with a melancholy smile, and then going to the door, opened it with a bowed head and respectful courtesy. At the act, Polly plucked up courage again, and with it a slight dash of her old audacity.

"I'm sure I'm very sorry that I ain't got any love sorrows," she said demurely. "And I suppose it's very dreadful in me not to have been raving and broken-hearted over somebody or other as that woman has said. Only," she waited till she had gained the secure vantage of the threshold, "I never knew a gentleman to *object* to it before!"

With this Parthian arrow from her blue eyes she slipped into the passage and vanished through the door of the opposite parlor. For an instant Don José remained motionless and reflecting. Then, recovering himself with grave precision, he deliberately picked up his narrow black gloves from the table, drew them on, took his hat in his hand, and solemnly striding across the passage, entered the door that had just closed behind her.

III.

It must not be supposed that in the meantime the flight of Don José and his follower

was unattended by any commotion at the rancho of the Blessed Innocents. At the end of three hours' deliberation, in which the retainers were severally examined, the corral searched, and the well in the courtyard sounded, scouts were dispatched in different directions, who returned with the surprising information that the fugitives were not in the vicinity. A trustworthy messenger was sent to Monterey for "custom-house paper," on which to draw up a formal declaration of the affair. The archbishop was summoned from San Luis, and Don Victor and Don Vincente Sepulvida, with the Donas Carmen and Inez Alvarado, and a former alcalde, gathered at a family council the next day. In this serious conclave the good Father Felipe once more expounded the alienated condition and the dangerous reading of the absent man. In the midst of which the ordinary post brought a letter from Don José, calmly inviting the family to dine with him and Roberto at San Mateo on the following Wednesday. The document was passed gravely from hand to hand. Was it a fresh evidence of mental aberration — an audacity of frenzy — or a trick of the *vaquero*? The archbishop and alcalde shook their heads

—it was without doubt a lawless, even a sacrilegious and blasphemous *fête*. But a certain curiosity of the ladies and of Father Felipe carried the day. Without formally accepting the invitation it was decided that the family should examine the afflicted man, with a view of taking active measures hereafter. On the day appointed, the traveling carriage of the Sepulvidas, an equipage coeval with the beginning of the century, drawn by two white mules gaudily caparisoned, halted before the hotel at San Mateo and disgorged Father Felipe, the Donas Carmen and Inez Alvarado and Maria Sepulvida, while Don Victor and Don Vincente Sepulvida, their attendant cavaliers on fiery mustangs, like outriders, drew rein at the same time. A slight thrill of excitement, as of the advent of a possible circus, had preceded them through the little town; a faint blending of cigarette smoke and garlic announced their presence on the veranda.

Ushered into the parlor of the hotel, apparently set apart for their reception, they were embarrassed at not finding their host present. But they were still more disconcerted when a tall full-bearded stranger, with a shrewd amused-looking face, rose from a

chair by the window, and stepping forward, saluted them in fluent Spanish with a slight American accent.

“ I have to ask you, gentlemen and ladies,” he began, with a certain insinuating ease and frankness that alternately aroused and lulled their suspicions, “ to pardon the absence of our friend Don José Sepulvida at this preliminary greeting. For to be perfectly frank with you, although the ultimate aim and object of our gathering is a social one, you are doubtless aware that certain infelicities and misunderstandings — common to most families — have occurred, and a free, dispassionate, unprejudiced discussion and disposal of them at the beginning will only tend to augment the goodwill of our gathering.”

“ The Señor without doubt is ” — suggested the padre, with a polite interrogative pause.

“ Pardon me ! I forgot to introduce myself. Colonel Parker — entirely at your service and that of these charming ladies.”

The ladies referred to allowed their eyes to rest with evident prepossession on the insinuating stranger. “ Ah, a soldier,” said Don Vincente.

“Formerly,” said the American lightly; “at present a lawyer, the counsel of Don José.”

A sudden rigor of suspicion stiffened the company; the ladies withdrew their eyes; the priest and the Sepulvidas exchanged glances.

“Come,” said Colonel Parker, with apparent unconsciousness of the effect of his disclosure, “let us begin frankly. You have, I believe, some anxiety in regard to the mental condition of Don José.”

“We believe him to be mad,” said Padre Felipe promptly, “irresponsible, possessed!”

“That is your opinion; good,” said the lawyer quietly.

“And ours too,” clamored the party, “without doubt.”

“Good,” returned the lawyer with perfect cheerfulness. “As his relations, you have no doubt had superior opportunities for observing his condition. I understand also that you may think it necessary to have him legally declared *non compos*, a proceeding which, you are aware, might result in the incarceration of our distinguished friend in a mad-house.”

“Pardon, Señor,” interrupted Dona Maria

proudly, "you do not comprehend the family. When a Sepulvida is visited of God we do not ask the Government to confine him like a criminal. We protect him in his own house from the consequences of his frenzy."

"From the machinations of the worldly and heretical," broke in the priest, "and from the waste and dispersion of inherited possessions."

"Very true," continued Colonel Parker, with unalterable good-humor; "but I was only about to say that there might be conflicting evidence of his condition. For instance, our friend has been here three days. In that time he has had three interviews with three individuals under singular circumstances." Colonel Parker then briefly recounted the episodes of the landlord, the gambler, Miss Jenkinson and the poetess, as they had been related to him. "Yet," he continued, "all but one of these individuals are willing to swear that they not only believe Don José perfectly sane, but endowed with a singularly sound judgment. In fact, the testimony of Mr. Hamlin and Miss Jenkinson is remarkably clear on that subject."

The company exchanged a supercilious smile. "Do you not see, O Señor Advo-

cate," said Don Vincente compassionately, "that this is but a conspiracy to avail themselves of our relative's weakness. Of a necessity they find him sane who benefits them."

"I have thought of that, and am glad to hear you say so," returned the lawyer still more cheerfully, "for your prompt opinion emboldens me to be at once perfectly frank with you. Briefly then, Don José has summoned me here to make a final disposition of his property. In the carrying out of certain theories of his, which it is not my province to question, he has resolved upon comparative poverty for himself as best fitted for his purpose, and to employ his wealth solely for others. In fact, of all his vast possessions he retains for himself only an income sufficient for the bare necessities of life."

"And you have done this?" they asked in one voice.

"Not yet," said the lawyer.

"Blessed San Antonio, we have come in time!" ejaculated Dona Carmen. "Another day and it would have been too late; it was an inspiration of the Blessed Innocents themselves," said Dona Maria, crossing herself. "Can you longer doubt that this is

the wildest madness?" said Father Felipe with flashing eyes.

"Yet," returned the lawyer, caressing his heavy beard with a meditative smile, "the ingenious fellow actually instanced the vows of *your own order*, reverend sir, as an example in support of his theory. But to be brief. Conceiving, then, that his holding of property was a mere accident of heritage, not admitted by him, unworthy his acceptance, and a relic of superstitious ignorance" —

"This is the very sacrilege of Satanic prepossession," broke in the priest indignantly.

"He therefore," continued the lawyer composedly, "makes over and reverts the whole of his possessions, with the exceptions I have stated, to his family and the Church."

A breathless and stupefying silence fell upon the company. In the dead hush the sound of Polly Jenkinson's piano, played in a distant room, could be distinctly heard. With their vacant eyes staring at him the speaker continued:

"That deed of gift I have drawn up as he dictated it. I don't mind saying that in the opinion of some he might be declared *non compos* upon the evidence of that alone. I

need not say how relieved I am to find that your opinion coincides with my own."

"But," gasped Father Felipe hurriedly, with a quick glance at the others, "it does not follow that it will be necessary to resort to these legal measures. Care, counsel, persuasion —"

"The general ministering of kinship — nursing, a woman's care — the instincts of affection," piped Dona Maria in breathless eagerness.

"Any light social distraction — a harmless flirtation — a possible attachment," suggested Dona Carmen shyly.

"Change of scene — active exercise — experiences — even as those you have related," broke in Don Vincente.

"I for one have ever been opposed to *legal* measures," said Don Victor. "A mere consultation of friends — in fact, a *fête* like this is sufficient."

"Good friends," said Father Felipe, who had by this time recovered himself, taking out his snuff-box portentously, "it would seem truly, from the document which this discreet *caballero* has spoken of, that the errors of our dear Don José are rather of method than intent, and that while we may freely accept the one" —

"Pardon," interrupted Colonel Parker with bland persistence, "but I must point out to you that what we call in law 'a consideration' is necessary to the legality of a conveyance, even though that consideration be frivolous and calculated to impair the validity of the document."

"Truly," returned the good padre insinuatingly; "but if a discreet advocate were to suggest the substitution of some more pious and reasonable consideration" —

"But that would be making it a perfectly sane and gratuitous document, not only glaringly inconsistent with your charges, my good friends, with Don José's attitude towards you and his flight from home, but open to the gravest suspicion in law. In fact, its apparent propriety in the face of these facts would imply improper influence."

The countenances of the company fell. The lawyer's face, however, became still more good-humored and sympathizing. "The case is simply this. If in the opinion of judge and jury Don José is declared insane, the document is worthless except as a proof of that fact or a possible indication of the undue influence of his relations, which might compel the court to select his guardians and trustees elsewhere than among them."

"Friend Abogado," said Father Felipe with extraordinary deliberation, "the document thou hast just described so eloquently convinces me beyond all doubt that Don José is not only perfectly sane but endowed with a singular discretion. I consider it as a delicate and high-spirited intimation to us, his friends and kinsmen, of his unalterable and logically just devotion to his family and religion, whatever may seem to be his poetical and imaginative manner of declaring it. I think there is not one here," continued the padre, looking around him impressively, "who is not entirely satisfied of Don José's reason and competency to arrange his own affairs."

"Entirely," "truly," "perfectly," eagerly responded the others with affecting spontaneity.

"Nay, more. To prevent any misconception, we shall deem it our duty to take every opportunity of making our belief publicly known," added Father Felipe.

The padre and Colonel Parker gazed long and gravely into each other's eyes. It may have been an innocent touch of the sunlight through the window, but a faint gleam seemed to steal into the pupil of the affable

lawyer at the same moment that, probably from the like cause, there was a slight nervous contraction of the left eyelid of the pious father. But it passed, and the next instant the door opened to admit Don José Sepulvida.

He was at once seized and effusively embraced by the entire company with every protest of affection and respect. Not only Mr. Hamlin and Mr. Jenkinson, who accompanied him as invited guests, but Roberto, in a new suit of clothes and guiltless of stain or trace of dissipation, shared in the pronounced friendliness of the kinsmen. Padre Felipe took snuff, Colonel Parker blew his nose gently.

Nor were they less demonstrative of their new convictions later at the banquet. Don José, with Jenkinson and the padre on his right and left, preserved his gentle and half-melancholy dignity in the midst of the noisy fraternization. Even Padre Felipe, in a brief speech or exhortation proposing the health of their host, lent himself in his own tongue to this polite congeniality. "We have had also, my friends and brothers," he said in peroration, "a pleasing example of the compliment of imitation shown by our

beloved Don José. No one who has known him during his friendly sojourn in this community but will be struck with the conviction that he has acquired that most marvelous faculty of your great American nation, the exhibition of humor and of the practical joke."

Every eye was turned upon the imperturbable face of Don José as he slowly rose to reply. "In bidding you to this *fête*, my friends and kinsmen," he began calmly, "it was with the intention of formally embracing the habits, customs, and spirit of American institutions by certain methods of renunciation of the past, as became a *caballero* of honor and resolution. Those methods may possibly be known to some of you." He paused for a moment as if to allow the members of his family to look unconscious. "Since then, in the wisdom of God, it has occurred to me that my purpose may be as honorably effected by a discreet blending of the past and the present — in a word, by the judicious combination of the interests of my native people and the American nation. In consideration of that purpose, friends and kinsmen, I ask you to join me in drinking the good health of my host Señor Jenkinson,

my future father-in-law, from whom I have to-day had the honor to demand the hand of the peerless Polly, his daughter, as the future mistress of the Rancho of the Blessed Innocents."

The marriage took place shortly after. Nor was the free will and independence of Don José Sepulvida in the least opposed by his relations. Whether they felt they had already committed themselves, or had hopes in the future, did not transpire. Enough that the escapade of a week was tacitly forgotten. The only allusion ever made to the bridegroom's peculiarities was drawn from the demure lips of the bride herself on her installation at the "Blessed Innocents."

"And what, little one, didst thou find in me to admire?" Don José had asked tenderly.

"Oh, you seemed to be so much like that dear old Don Quixote, you know," she answered demurely.

"Don Quixote," repeated Don José with gentle gravity. "But, my child, that was only a mere fiction — a romance, of one Cervantes. Believe me, of a truth there never was any such person!"

A SECRET OF TELEGRAPH HILL.



I.

As Mr. Herbert Bly glanced for the first time at the house which was to be his future abode in San Francisco, he was somewhat startled. In that early period of feverish civic improvement the street before it had been repeatedly graded and lowered until the dwelling — originally a pioneer suburban villa perched upon a slope of Telegraph Hill — now stood sixty feet above the sidewalk, superposed like some Swiss chalet on successive galleries built in the sand-hill, and connected by a half-dozen distinct zigzag flights of wooden staircase. Stimulated, however, by the thought that the view from the top would be a fine one, and that existence there would have all the quaint originality of Robinson Crusoe's tree-dwelling, Mr. Bly began cheerfully to mount the steps. It should be premised that, although a recently appointed clerk in a large banking house, Mr. Bly was

somewhat youthful and imaginative, and regarded the ascent as part of that "Excelsior" climbing pointed out by a great poet as a praiseworthy function of ambitious youth.

Reaching at last the level of the veranda, he turned to the view. The distant wooded shore of Contra Costa, the tossing white-caps and dancing sails of the bay between, and the foreground at his feet of wharves and piers, with their reed-like jungles of masts and cordage, made up a bright, if somewhat material, picture. To his right rose the crest of the hill, historic and memorable as the site of the old semaphoric telegraph, the tossing of whose gaunt arms formerly thrilled the citizens with tidings from the sea. Turning to the house, he recognized the prevailing style of light cottage architecture, although incongruously confined to narrow building plots and the civic regularity of a precise street frontage. Thus a dozen other villas, formerly scattered over the slope, had been laboriously displaced and moved to the rigorous parade line drawn by the street surveyor, no matter how irregular and independent their design and structure. Happily, the few scrub-oaks and low bushes which formed the scant vegetation of this vast sand

dune offered no obstacle and suggested no incongruity. Beside the house before which Mr. Bly now stood, a prolific Madeira vine, quickened by the six months' sunshine, had alone survived the displacement of its foundations, and in its untrimmed luxuriance half hid the upper veranda from his view.

Still glowing with his exertion, the young man rang the bell and was admitted into a fair-sized drawing-room, whose tasteful and well-arranged furniture at once prepossessed him. An open piano, a sheet of music carelessly left on the stool, a novel lying face downwards on the table beside a skein of silk, and the distant rustle of a vanished skirt through an inner door, gave a suggestion of refined domesticity to the room that touched the fancy of the homeless and nomadic Bly. He was still enjoying, in half embarrassment, that vague and indescribable atmosphere of a refined woman's habitual presence, when the door opened and the mistress of the house formally presented herself.

She was a faded but still handsome woman. Yet she wore that peculiar long, limp, formless house-shawl which in certain phases of Anglo-Saxon spinster and widowhood assumes the functions of the recluse's veil and

announces the renunciation of worldly vanities and a resigned indifference to external feminine contour. The most audacious masculine arm would shrink from clasping that shapeless void in which the flatness of asceticism or the heavings of passion might alike lie buried. She had also in some mysterious way imported into the fresh and pleasant room a certain bombaziny shadow of the past, and a suggestion of that appalling reminiscence known as "better days." Though why it should be always represented by ashen memories, or why better days in the past should be supposed to fix their fitting symbol in depression in the present, Mr. Bly was too young and too preoccupied at the moment to determine. He only knew that he was a little frightened of her, and fixed his gaze with a hopeless fascination on a letter which she somewhat portentously carried under the shawl, and which seemed already to have yellowed in its arctic shade.

"Mr. Carstone has written to me that you would call," said Mrs. Brooks with languid formality. "Mr. Carstone was a valued friend of my late husband, and I suppose has told you the circumstances — the only circumstances — which admit of my enter-

taining his proposition of taking anybody, even temporarily, under my roof. The absence of my dear son for six months at Portland, Oregon, enables me to place his room at the disposal of Mr. Carstone's young protégé, who, Mr. Carstone tells me, and I have every reason to believe, is, if perhaps not so seriously inclined nor yet a church communicant, still of a character and reputation not unworthy to follow my dear Tappington in our little family circle as he has at his desk in the bank."

The sensitive Bly, struggling painfully out of an abstraction as to how he was ever to offer the weekly rent of his lodgings to such a remote and respectable person, and also somewhat embarrassed at being appealed to in the third person, here started and bowed.

"The name of Bly is not unfamiliar to me," continued Mrs. Brooks, pointing to a chair and sinking resignedly into another, where her baleful shawl at once assumed the appearance of a dust-cover; "some of my dearest friends were intimate with the Blys of Philadelphia. They were a branch of the Maryland Blys of the eastern shore, one of whom my Uncle James married. Perhaps you are distantly related?"

Mrs. Brooks was perfectly aware that her visitor was of unknown Western origin, and a poor but clever protégé of the rich banker; but she was one of a certain class of American women who, in the midst of a fierce democracy, are more or less cat-like conservators of family pride and lineage, and more or less felinely inconsistent and treacherous to republican principles. Bly, who had just settled in his mind to send her the rent anonymously — as a weekly valentine — recovered himself and his spirits in his usual boyish fashion.

“I am afraid, Mrs. Brooks,” he said gayly, “I cannot lay claim to any distinguished relationship, even to that ‘Nelly Bly’ who, you remember, ‘winked her eye when she went to sleep.’” He stopped in consternation. The terrible conviction flashed upon him that this quotation from a popular negro-minstrel song could not possibly be remembered by a lady as refined as his hostess, or even known to her superior son. The conviction was intensified by Mrs. Brooks rising with a smileless face, slightly shedding the possible vulgarity with a shake of her shawl, and remarking that she would show him her son’s room, led the way upstairs to

the apartment recently vacated by the perfect Tappington.

Preceded by the same distant flutter of unseen skirts in the passage which he had first noticed on entering the drawing-room, and which evidently did not proceed from his companion, whose self-composed ceremonies would have repressed any such indecorous agitation, Mr. Bly stepped timidly into the room. It was a very pretty apartment, suggesting the same touches of tasteful refinement in its furniture and appointments, and withal so feminine in its neatness and regularity, that, conscious of his frontier habits and experience, he felt at once repulsively incongruous. "I cannot expect, Mr. Bly," said Mrs. Brooks resignedly, "that you can share my son's extreme sensitiveness to disorder and irregularity; but I must beg you to avoid as much as possible disturbing the arrangement of the book-shelves, which, you observe, comprise his books of serious reference, the Biblical commentaries, and the sermons which were his habitual study. I must beg you to exercise the same care in reference to the valuable offerings from his Sabbath-school scholars which are upon the mantel. The embroi-

dered book-marker, the gift of the young ladies of his Bible-class in Dr. Stout's church, is also, you perceive, kept for ornament and affectionate remembrance. The harmonium — even if you are not yourself given to sacred song — I trust you will not find in your way, nor object to my daughter continuing her practice during your daily absence. Thank you. The door you are looking at leads by a flight of steps to the side street."

"A very convenient arrangement," said Bly hopefully, who saw a chance for an occasional unostentatious escape from a too protracted contemplation of Tappington's perfections. "I mean," he added hurriedly, "to avoid disturbing you at night."

"I believe my son had neither the necessity nor desire to use it for that purpose," returned Mrs. Brooks severely; "although he found it sometimes a convenient short cut to church on Sabbath when he was late."

Bly, who in his boyish sensitiveness to external impressions had by this time concluded that a life divided between the past perfections of Tappington and the present renunciations of Mrs. Brooks would be intolerable, and was again abstractedly inventing some delicate excuse for withdrawing

without committing himself further, was here suddenly attracted by a repetition of the rustling of the unseen skirt. This time it was nearer, and this time it seemed to strike even Mrs. Brooks's remote preoccupation. "My daughter, who is deeply devoted to her brother," she said, slightly raising her voice, "will take upon herself the care of looking after Tappington's precious mementoes, and spare you the trouble. Cherry, dear! this way. This is the young gentleman spoken of by Mr. Carstone, your papa's friend. My daughter Cherubina, Mr. Bly."

The fair owner of the rustling skirt, which turned out to be a pretty French print, had appeared at the doorway. She was a tall, slim blonde, with a shy, startled manner, as of a penitent nun who was suffering for some conventual transgression — a resemblance that was heightened by her short-cut hair, that might have been cropped as if for punishment. A certain likeness to her mother suggested that she was qualifying for that saint's ascetic shawl — subject, however, to rebellious intervals, indicated in the occasional sidelong fires of her gray eyes. Yet the vague impression that she knew more of the world than her mother, and that she did

not look at all as if her name was Cherubina, struck Bly in the same momentary glance.

"Mr. Bly is naturally pleased with what he has seen of our dear Tappington's appointments; and as I gather from Mr. Carstone's letter that he is anxious to enter at once and make the most of the dear boy's absence, you will see, my dear Cherry, that Ellen has everything ready for him?"

Before the unfortunate Bly could explain or protest, the young girl lifted her gray eyes to his. Whether she had perceived and understood his perplexity he could not tell; but the swift shy glance was at once appealing, assuring, and intelligent. She was certainly unlike her mother and brother. Acting with his usual impulsiveness, he forgot his previous resolution, and before he left had engaged to begin his occupation of the room on the following day.

The next afternoon found him installed. Yet, after he had unpacked his modest possessions and put them away, after he had placed his few books on the shelves, where they looked glaringly trivial and frivolous beside the late tenant's severe studies; after he had set out his scanty treasures in the way of photographs and some curious me-

mentoes of his wandering life, and then quickly put them back again with a sudden angry pride at exposing them to the unsympathetic incongruity of the other ornaments, he, nevertheless, felt ill at ease. He glanced in vain around the pretty room. It was not the delicately flowered wall-paper; it was not the white and blue muslin window-curtains gracefully tied up with blue and white ribbons; it was not the spotless bed, with its blue and white festooned mosquito-net and flounced valances, and its medallion portrait of an unknown bishop at the back; it was not the few tastefully framed engravings of certain cardinal virtues, "The Rock of Ages," and "The Guardian Angel"; it was not the casts in relief of "Night" and "Morning"; it was certainly not the cosy dimity-covered arm-chairs and sofa, nor yet the clean-swept polished grate with its cheerful fire sparkling against the chill afternoon sea-fogs without; neither was it the mere feminine suggestion, for that touched a sympathetic chord in his impulsive nature; nor the religious and ascetic influence, for he had occupied a monastic cell in a school of the padres at an old mission, and slept profoundly; — it was none of those, and yet a

part of all. Most habitations retain a cast or shell of their previous tenant that, fitting tightly or loosely, is still able to adjust itself to the newcomer; in most occupied apartments there is still a shadowy suggestion of the owner's individuality; there was nothing here that fitted Bly — nor was there either, strange to say, any evidence of the past proprietor in this inhospitality of sensation. It did not strike him at the time that it was this very *lack* of individuality which made it weird and unreal, that it was strange only because it was *artificial*, and that a *real* Tappington had never inhabited it.

He walked to the window — that never-failing resource of the unquiet mind — and looked out. He was a little surprised to find, that, owing to the grading of the house, the scrub-oaks and bushes of the hill were nearly on the level of his window, as also was the adjoining side street on which his second door actually gave. Opening this, the sudden invasion of the sea-fog and the figure of a pedestrian casually passing along the disused and abandoned pavement not a dozen feet from where he had been comfortably seated, presented such a striking contrast to the studious quiet and cosiness of his

secluded apartment that he hurriedly closed the door again with a sense of indiscreet exposure. Returning to the window, he glanced to the left, and found that he was overlooked by the side veranda of another villa in the rear, evidently on its way to take position on the line of the street. Although in actual and deliberate transit on rollers across the backyard and still occulting a part of the view, it remained, after the reckless fashion of the period, inhabited. Certainly, with a door fronting a thoroughfare, and a neighbor gradually approaching him, he would not feel lonely or lack excitement.

He drew his arm-chair to the fire and tried to realize the all-pervading yet evasive Tappington. There was no portrait of him in the house, and although Mrs. Brooks had said that he "favored" his sister, Bly had, without knowing why, instinctively resented it. He had even timidly asked his employer, and had received the vague reply that he was "good-looking enough," and the practical but discomposing retort, "What do you want to know for?" As he really did not know why, the inquiry had dropped. He stared at the monumental crystal ink-stand half full of ink, yet spotless and free

from stains, that stood on the table, and tried to picture Tappington daintily dipping into it to thank the fair donors — “daughters of Rebecca.” Who were they? and what sort of man would they naturally feel grateful to?

What was that?

He turned to the window, which had just resounded to a slight tap or blow, as if something soft had struck it. With an instinctive suspicion of the propinquity of the adjoining street he rose, but a single glance from the window satisfied him that no missile would have reached it from thence. He scanned the low bushes on the level before him; certainly no one could be hiding there. He lifted his eyes toward the house on the left; the curtains of the nearest window appeared to be drawn suddenly at the same moment. Could it have come from there? Looking down upon the window-ledge, there lay the mysterious missile — a little misshapen ball. He opened the window and took it up. It was a small handkerchief tied into a soft knot, and dampened with water to give it the necessary weight as a projectile.

Was it apparently the trick of a mischievous child? or —

But here a faint knock on the door leading into the hall checked his inquiry. He opened it sharply in his excitement, and was embarrassed to find the daughter of his hostess standing there, shy, startled, and evidently equally embarrassed by his abrupt response.

"Mother only wanted me to ask you if Ellen had put everything to rights," she said, making a step backwards.

"Oh, thank you. Perfectly," said Herbert with effusion. "Nothing could be better done. In fact" —

"You're quite sure she has n't forgotten anything? or that there is n't anything you would like changed?" she continued, with her eyes leveled on the floor.

"Nothing, I assure you," he said, looking at her downcast lashes. As she still remained motionless, he continued cheerfully, "Would you — would you — care to look round and see?"

"No; I thank you."

There was an awkward pause. He still continued to hold the door open. Suddenly she moved forward with a school-girl stride, entered the room, and going to the harmonium, sat down upon the music-stool beside

it, slightly bending forward, with one long, slim, white hand on top of the other, resting over her crossed knees.

Herbert was a little puzzled. It was the awkward and brusque act of a very young person, and yet nothing now could be more gentle and self-composed than her figure and attitude.

"Yes," he continued, smilingly; "I am only afraid that I may not be able to live quite up to the neatness and regularity of the example I find here everywhere. You know I am dreadfully careless and not at all orderly. I shudder to think what may happen; but you and your mother, Miss Brooks, I trust, will make up your minds to overlook and forgive a good deal. I shall do my best to be worthy of Mr. Tap—of my predecessor—but even then I am afraid you'll find me a great bother."

She raised her shy eyelids. The faintest ghost of a long-buried dimple came into her pale cheek as she said softly, to his utter consternation:

"Rats!"

Had she uttered an oath he could not have been more startled than he was by this choice gem of Western saloon-slang from the

BR

JOHN JOSE, CAL.

pure lips of this Evangeline-like figure before him. He sat gazing at her with a wild hysteric desire to laugh. She lifted her eyes again, swept him with a slightly terrified glance, and said:

"Tap says you all say that when any one makes-believe politeness to you."

"Oh, your *brother* says that, does he?" said Herbert, laughing.

"Yes, and sometimes 'Old rats.' But," she continued hurriedly, "*he* does n't say it; he says *you* all do. My brother is very particular, and very good. Doctor Stout loves him. He is thought very much of in all Christian circles. That book-mark was given to him by one of his classes."

Every trace of her dimples had vanished. She looked so sweetly grave, and withal so maidenly, sitting there slightly smoothing the lengths of her pink fingers, that Herbert was somewhat embarrassed.

"But I assure you, Miss Brooks, I was not making-believe. I am really very careless, and everything is so proper—I mean so neat and pretty—here, that I"—he stopped, and, observing the same backward wandering of her eye as of a filly about to shy, quickly changed the subject. "You

have, or are about to have, neighbors?" he said, glancing towards the windows as he recalled the incident of a moment before.

"Yes; and they're not at all nice people. They are from Pike County, and very queer. They came across the plains in '50. They say 'Stranger'; the men are vulgar, and the girls very forward. Tap forbids my ever going to the window and looking at them. They're quite what you would call 'off color.'"

Herbert, who did not dare to say that he never would have dreamed of using such an expression in any young girl's presence, was plunged in silent consternation.

"Then your brother doesn't approve of them?" he said, at last, awkwardly.

"Oh, not at all. He even talked of having ground-glass put in all these windows, only it would make the light bad."

Herbert felt very embarrassed. If the mysterious missile came from these objectionable young persons, it was evidently because they thought they had detected a more accessible and sympathizing individual in the stranger who now occupied the room. He concluded he had better not say anything about it.

Miss Brooks's golden eyelashes were bent towards the floor. "Do you play sacred music, Mr. Bly?" she said, without raising them.

"I am afraid not."

"Perhaps you know only negro-minstrel songs?"

"I am afraid — yes."

"I know one." The dimples faintly came back again. "It's called 'The Ham-fat Man.' Some day when mother is n't in I'll play it for you."

Then the dimples fled again, and she immediately looked so distressed that Herbert came to her assistance.

"I suppose your brother taught you that too?"

"Oh dear, no!" she returned, with her frightened glance; "I only heard him say some people preferred that kind of thing to sacred music, and one day I saw a copy of it in a music-store window in Clay Street, and bought it. Oh no! Tappington did n't teach it to me."

In the pleasant discovery that she was at times independent of her brother's perfections, Herbert smiled, and sympathetically drew a step nearer to her. She rose at once,

somewhat primly holding back the sides of her skirt, school-girl fashion, with thumb and finger, and her eyes cast down.

"Good afternoon, Mr. Bly."

"Must you go? Good afternoon."

She walked directly to the open door, looking very tall and stately as she did so, but without turning towards him. When she reached it she lifted her eyes; there was the slightest suggestion of a return of her dimples in the relaxation of her grave little mouth. Then she said, "Good-bye, Mr. Bly," and departed.

The skirt of her dress rustled for an instant in the passage. Herbert looked after her. "I wonder if she skipped then — she looks like a girl that might skip at such a time," he said to himself. "How very odd she is — and how simple! But I must pull her up in that slang when I know her better. Fancy her brother telling her *that*! What a pair they must be!" Nevertheless, when he turned back into the room again he forbore going to the window to indulge further curiosity in regard to his wicked neighbors. A certain new feeling of respect to his late companion — and possibly to himself — held him in check. Much as he resented Tap-

pington's perfections, he resented quite as warmly the presumption that he was not quite as perfect, which was implied in that mysterious overture. He glanced at the stool on which she had been sitting with a half-brotherly smile, and put it reverently on one side with a very vivid recollection of her shy maidenly figure. In some mysterious way too the room seemed to have lost its formal strangeness; perhaps it was the touch of individuality — *hers* — that had been wanting? He began thoughtfully to dress himself for his regular dinner at the Poodle Dog Restaurant, and when he left the room he turned back to look once more at the stool where she had sat. Even on his way to that fast and famous café of the period he felt, for the first time in his thoughtless but lonely life, the gentle security of the home he had left behind him.

II.

It was three or four days before he became firmly adjusted to his new quarters. During this time he had met Cherry casually on the staircase, in going or coming, and received her shy greetings; but she had not

repeated her visit, nor again alluded to it. He had spent part of a formal evening in the parlor in company with a calling deacon, who, unappalled by the Indian shawl for which the widow had exchanged her household cerements on such occasions, appeared to Herbert to have remote matrimonial designs, as far at least as a sympathetic deprecation of the vanities of the present, an echoing of her sighs like a modest encore, a preternatural gentility of manner, a vague allusion to the necessity of bearing "one another's burdens," and an everlasting "promise" in store, would seem to imply. To Herbert's vivid imagination, a discussion on the doctrinal points of last Sabbath's sermon was fraught with delicate suggestion; and an acceptance by the widow of an appointment to attend the Wednesday evening "Lectures" had all the shy reluctant yielding of a granted rendezvous. Oddly enough, the more formal attitude seemed to be reserved for the young people, who, in the suggestive atmosphere of this spiritual flirtation, alone appeared to preserve the proprieties and, to some extent, decorously chaperon their elders. Herbert gravely turned the leaves of Cherry's music while she played

and sang one or two discreet but depressing songs expressive of her unalterable but proper devotion to her mother's clock, her father's arm-chair, and her aunt's Bible ; and Herbert joined somewhat boyishly in the soul-subduing refrain. Only once he ventured to suggest in a whisper that he would like to add *her* music-stool to the adorable inventory ; but he was met by such a disturbed and terrified look that he desisted. "Another night of this wild and reckless dissipation will finish me," he said lugubriously to himself when he reached the solitude of his room. "I wonder how many times a week I'd have to help the girl play the spiritual gooseberry downstairs before we could have any fun ourselves?"

Here the sound of distant laughter, interspersed with vivacious feminine shrieks, came through the open window. He glanced between the curtains. His neighbor's house was brilliantly lit, and the shadows of a few romping figures were chasing each other across the muslin shades of the windows. The objectionable young women were evidently enjoying themselves. In some conditions of the mind there is a certain exasperation in the spectacle of unmeaning enjoyment, and

he shut the window sharply. At the same moment some one knocked at his door.

It was Miss Brooks, who had just come upstairs.

"Will you please let me have my music-stool?"

He stared at her a moment in surprise, then recovering himself, said, "Yes, certainly," and brought the stool. For an instant he was tempted to ask why she wanted it, but his pride forbade him.

"Thank you. Good-night."

"Good-night!"

"I hope it was n't in your way?"

"Not at all."

"Good-night!"

"Good-night."

She vanished. Herbert was perplexed. Between young ladies whose naïve exuberance impelled them to throw handkerchiefs at his window and young ladies whose equally naïve modesty demanded the withdrawal from his bedroom of a chair on which they had once sat, his lot seemed to have fallen in a troubled locality. Yet a day or two later he heard Cherry practising on the harmonium as he was ascending the stairs on his return from business; she had departed

before he entered the room, but had left the music-stool behind her. It was not again removed.

One Sunday, the second or third of his tenancy, when Cherry and her mother were at church, and he had finished some work that he had brought from the bank, his former restlessness and sense of strangeness returned. The regular afternoon fog had thickened early, and, driving him back from a cheerless, chilly ramble on the hill, had left him still more depressed and solitary. In sheer desperation he moved some of the furniture, and changed the disposition of several smaller ornaments. Growing bolder, he even attacked the sacred shelf devoted to Tappington's serious literature and moral studies. At first glance the book of sermons looked suspiciously fresh and new for a volume of habitual reference, but its leaves were carefully cut, and contained one or two book-marks. It was only another evidence of that perfect youth's care and neatness. As he was replacing it he noticed a small object folded in white paper at the back of the shelf. To put the book back into its former position it was necessary to take this out. He did so, but its contents slid

from his fingers and the paper to the floor. To his utter consternation, looking down he saw a pack of playing-cards strewn at his feet!

He hurriedly picked them up. They were worn and slippery from use, and exhaled a faint odor of tobacco. Had they been left there by some temporary visitor unknown to Tappington and his family, or had they been hastily hidden by a servant? Yet they were of a make and texture superior to those that a servant would possess; looking at them carefully, he recognized them to be of a quality used by the better-class gamblers. Restoring them carefully to their former position, he was tempted to take out the other volumes, and was rewarded with the further discovery of a small box of ivory counters, known as "poker-chips." It was really very extraordinary! It was quite the *cache* of some habitual gambler. Herbert smiled grimly at the irreverent incongruity of the hiding-place selected by its unknown and mysterious owner, and amused himself by fancying the horror of his sainted predecessor had *he* made the discovery. He determined to replace them, and to put some mark upon the volumes before them in order to

detect any future disturbance of them in his absence.

Ought he not to take Miss Brooks in his confidence? Or should he say nothing about it at present, and trust to chance to discover the sacrilegious hider? Could it possibly be Cherry herself, guilty of the same innocent curiosity that had impelled her to buy the "Ham-fat Man"? Preposterous! Besides, the cards had been used, and she could not play poker alone!

He watched the rolling fog extinguish the line of Russian Hill, the last bit of far perspective from his window. He glanced at his neighbor's veranda, already dripping with moisture; the windows were blank; he remembered to have heard the girls giggling in passing down the side street on their way to church, and had noticed from behind his own curtains that one was rather pretty. This led him to think of Cherry again, and to recall the quaint yet melancholy grace of her figure as she sat on the stool opposite. Why had she withdrawn it so abruptly; did she consider his jesting allusion to it indecorous and presuming? Had he really meant it seriously; and was he beginning to think too much about her? Would she

ever come again? How nice it would be if she returned from church alone early, and they could have a comfortable chat together here! Would she sing the "Ham-fat Man" for him? Would the dimples come back if she did? Should he ever know more of this quaint repressed side of her nature? After all, what a dear, graceful, tantalizing, lovable creature she was! Ought he not at all hazards try to know her better? Might it not be here that he would find a perfect realization of his boyish dreams, and in *her* all that — what nonsense he was thinking!

Suddenly Herbert was startled by the sound of a light but hurried foot upon the wooden outer step of his second door, and the quick but ineffective turning of the door-handle. He started to his feet, his mind still filled with a vision of Cherry. Then he as suddenly remembered that he had locked the door on going out, putting the key in his overcoat pocket. He had returned by the front door, and his overcoat was now hanging in the lower hall.

The door again rattled impetuously. Then it was supplemented by a female voice in a hurried whisper: "Open quick, can't you? do hurry!"

He was confounded. The voice was authoritative, not unmusical; but it was *not* Cherry's. Nevertheless he called out quickly, "One moment, please, and I'll get the key!" dashed downstairs and up again, breathlessly unlocked the door and threw it open.

Nobody was there!

He ran out into the street. On one side it terminated abruptly on the cliff on which his dwelling was perched; on the other, it descended more gradually into the next thoroughfare; but up and down the street, on either hand, no one was to be seen. A slightly superstitious feeling for an instant crept over him. Then he reflected that the mysterious visitor could in the interval of his getting the key have easily slipped down the steps of the cliff or entered the shrubbery of one of the adjacent houses. But why had she not waited? And what did she want? As he reëntered his door he mechanically raised his eyes to the windows of his neighbor's. This time he certainly was not mistaken. The two amused, mischievous faces that suddenly disappeared behind the curtain as he looked up showed that the incident had not been unwitnessed. Yet it was impossible that it could have been either of

them. Their house was only accessible by a long détour. It might have been the trick of a confederate; but the tone of half familiarity and half entreaty in the unseen visitor's voice dispelled the idea of any collusion. He entered the room and closed the door angrily. A grim smile stole over his face as he glanced around at the dainty saint-like appointments of the absent Tappington, and thought what that irreproachable young man would have said to the indecorous intrusion, even though it had been a mistake. Would those shameless Pike County girls have dared to laugh at *him*?

But he was again puzzled to know why he himself should have been selected for this singular experience. Why was *he* considered fair game for these girls? And, for the matter of that, now that he reflected upon it, why had even this gentle, refined, and melancholy Cherry thought it necessary to talk slang to *him* on their first acquaintance, and offer to sing him the "Ham-fat Man"? It was true he had been a little gay, but never dissipated. Of course he was not a saint, like Tappington — oh, *that* was it! He believed he understood it now. He was suffering from that extravagant con-

ception of what worldliness consists of, so common to very good people with no knowledge of the world. Compared to Tappington he was in their eyes, of course, a rake and a roué. The explanation pleased him. He would not keep it to himself. He would gain Cherry's confidence and enlist her sympathies. Her gentle nature would revolt at this injustice to their lonely lodger. She would see that there were degrees of goodness besides her brother's. She would perhaps sit on that stool again and *not* sing the "Ham-fat Man."

A day or two afterwards the opportunity seemed offered to him. As he was coming home and ascending the long hilly street, his eye was taken by a tall graceful figure just preceding him. It was she. He had never before seen her in the street, and was now struck with her ladylike bearing and the grave superiority of her perfectly simple attire. In a thoroughfare haunted by handsome women and striking toilettes, the refined grace of her mourning costume, and a certain stateliness that gave her the look of a young widow, was a contrast that evidently attracted others than himself. It was with an odd mingling of pride and jealousy that

he watched the admiring yet respectful glances of the passers-by, some of whom turned to look again, and one or two to retrace their steps and follow her at a decorous distance. This caused him to quicken his own pace, with a new anxiety and a remorseful sense of wasted opportunity. What a booby he had been, not to have made more of his contiguity to this charming girl — to have been frightened at the naïve decorum of her maidenly instincts! He reached her side, and raised his hat with a trepidation at her new-found graces — with a boldness that was defiant of her other admirers. She blushed slightly.

“I thought you’d overtake me before,” she said naïvely. “*I saw you* ever so long ago.”

He stammered, with an equal simplicity, that he had not dared to.

She looked a little frightened again, and then said hurriedly: “I only thought that I would meet you on Montgomery Street, and we would walk home together. I don’t like to go out alone, and mother cannot always go with me. Tappington never cared to take me out — I don’t know why. I think he did n’t like the people staring and stop-

ping us. But they stare more — don't you think? — when one is alone. So I thought if you were coming straight home we might come together — unless you have something else to do?"

Herbert impulsively reiterated his joy at meeting her, and averred that no other engagement, either of business or pleasure, could or would stand in his way. Looking up, however, it was with some consternation that he saw they were already within a block of the house.

"Suppose we take a turn around the hill and come back by the old street down the steps?" he suggested earnestly.

The next moment he regretted it. The frightened look returned to her eyes; her face became melancholy and formal again.

"No!" she said quickly. "That would be taking a walk with you like these young girls and their young men on Saturdays. That's what Ellen does with the butcher's boy on Sundays. Tappington often used to meet them. Doing the 'Come, Philanders,' as he says you call it."

It struck Herbert that the didactic Tappington's method of inculcating a horror of slang in his sister's breast was open to some

objection; but they were already on the steps of their house, and he was too much mortified at the reception of his last unhappy suggestion to make the confidential disclosure he had intended, even if there had still been time.

"There's mother waiting for me," she said, after an awkward pause, pointing to the figure of Mrs. Brooks dimly outlined on the veranda. "I suppose she was beginning to be worried about my being out alone. She'll be so glad I met you." It didn't appear to Herbert, however, that Mrs. Brooks exhibited any extravagant joy over the occurrence, and she almost instantly retired with her daughter into the sitting-room, linking her arm in Cherry's, and, as it were, empanoplying her with her own invulnerable shawl. Herbert went to his room more dissatisfied with himself than ever.

Two or three days elapsed without his seeing Cherry; even the well-known rustle of her skirt in the passage was missing. On the third evening he resolved to bear the formal terrors of the drawing-room again, and stumbled upon a decorous party consisting of Mrs. Brooks, the deacon, and the pastor's wife — but not Cherry. It struck him

on entering that the momentary awkwardness of the company and the formal beginning of a new topic indicated that *he* had been the subject of their previous conversation. In this idea he continued, through that vague spirit of opposition which attacks impulsive people in such circumstances, to generally disagree with them on all subjects, and to exaggerate what he chose to believe they thought objectionable in him. He did not remain long; but learned in that brief interval that Cherry had gone to visit a friend in Contra Costa, and would be absent a fortnight; and he was conscious that the information was conveyed to him with a peculiar significance.

The result of which was only to intensify his interest in the absent Cherry, and for a week to plunge him in a sea of conflicting doubts and resolutions. At one time he thought seriously of demanding an explanation from Mrs. Brooks, and of confiding to her — as he had intended to do to Cherry — his fears that his character had been misinterpreted, and his reasons for believing so. But here he was met by the difficulty of formulating what he wished to have explained, and some doubts as to whether his

confidences were prudent. At another time he contemplated a serious imitation of Tappington's perfections, a renunciation of the world, and an entire change in his habits. He would go regularly to church — *her* church, and take up Tappington's desolate Bible-class. But here the torturing doubt arose whether a young lady who betrayed a certain secular curiosity, and who had evidently depended upon her brother for a knowledge of the world, would entirely like it. At times he thought of giving up the room and abandoning for ever this doubly dangerous proximity ; but here again he was deterred by the difficulty of giving a satisfactory reason to his employer, who had procured it as a favor. His passion — for such he began to fear it to be — led him once to the extravagance of asking a day's holiday from the bank, which he vaguely spent in the streets of Oakland in the hope of accidentally meeting the exiled Cherry.

III.

THE fortnight slowly passed. She returned, but he did not see her. She was always out or engaged in her room with some

female friend when Herbert was at home. This was singular, as she had never appeared to him as a young girl who was fond of visiting or had ever affected female friendships. In fact, there was little doubt now that, wittingly or unwittingly, she was avoiding him.

He was moodily sitting by the fire one evening, having returned early from dinner. In reply to his habitual but affectedly careless inquiry, Ellen had told him that Mrs. Brooks was confined to her room by a slight headache, and that Miss Brooks was out. He was trying to read, and listening to the wind that occasionally rattled the casement and caused the solitary gas-lamp that was visible in the side street to flicker and leap wildly. Suddenly he heard the same foot-fall upon his outer step and a light tap at the door. Determined this time to solve the mystery, he sprang to his feet and ran to the door; but to his anger and astonishment it was locked and the key was gone. Yet he was positive that *he* had not taken it out.

The tap was timidly repeated. In desperation he called out, "Please don't go away yet. The key is gone; but I'll find it in a moment." Nevertheless he was at his wits' end.

There was a hesitating pause and then the sound of a key cautiously thrust into the lock. It turned; the door opened, and a tall figure, whose face and form were completely hidden in a veil and long gray shawl, quickly glided into the room and closed the door behind it. Then it suddenly raised its arms, the shawl was parted, the veil fell aside, and Cherry stood before him!

Her face was quite pale. Her eyes, usually downcast, frightened, or coldly clear, were bright and beautiful with excitement. The dimples were faintly there, although the smile was sad and half hysterical. She remained standing, erect and tall, her arms dropped at her side, holding the veil and shawl that still depended from her shoulders.

"So — I've caught you!" she said, with a strange little laugh. "Oh yes. 'Please don't go away yet. I'll get the key in a moment,'" she continued, mimicking his recent utterance.

He could only stammer, "Miss Brooks — then it was *you*?"

"Yes; and you thought it was *she*, did n't you? Well, and you're caught! I did n't believe it; I would n't believe it when they

said it. I determined to find it out myself. And I have; and it's true."

Unable to determine whether she was serious or jesting, and conscious only of his delight at seeing her again, he advanced impulsively. But her expression instantly changed: she became at once stiff and school-girlishly formal, and stepped back towards the door.

"Don't come near me, or I'll go," she said quickly, with her hand upon the lock.

"But not before you tell me what you mean," he said half laughingly half earnestly. "Who is *she*? and what would n't you have believed? For upon my honor, Miss Brooks, I don't know what you are talking about."

His evident frankness and truthful manner appeared to puzzle her. "You mean to say you were expecting no one?" she said sharply.

"I assure you I was ~~not~~."

"And — and no woman was ever here — at that door?"

He hesitated. "Not to-night — not for a long time; not since you returned from Oakland."

"Then there *was* one?"

"I believe so."

"You *believe* — you don't *know*?"

"I believed it was a woman from her voice; for the door was locked, and the key was downstairs. When I fetched it and opened the door, she — or whoever it was — was gone."

"And that's why you said so imploringly, just now, 'Please don't go away yet'? You see I've caught you. Ah! I don't wonder you blush!"

If he had, his cheeks had caught fire from her brilliant eyes and the extravagantly affected sternness — as of a school-girl monitor — in her animated face. Certainly he had never seen such a transformation.

"Yes; but, you see, I wanted to know who the intruder was," he said, smiling at his own embarrassment.

"You did — well, perhaps *that* will tell you? It was found under your door before I went away." She suddenly produced from her pocket a folded paper and handed it to him. It was a misspelt scrawl, and ran as follows:—

"Why are you so cruel? Why do you keep me dancing on the steps before them gurls at the windows? Was it that stuck-up Saint, Miss Brooks, that you were afraid

of, my deer? Oh, you faithless trater! Wait till I ketch you! I'll tear your eyes out and hern!"

It did not require great penetration for Herbert to be instantly convinced that the writer of this vulgar epistle and the owner of the unknown voice were two very different individuals. The note was evidently a trick. A suspicion of its perpetrators flashed upon him.

"Whoever the woman was, it was not she who wrote the note," he said positively. "Somebody must have seen her at the door. I remember now that those girls — your neighbors — were watching me from their window when I came out. Depend upon it, that letter comes from them."

Cherry's eyes opened widely with a sudden childlike perception, and then shyly dropped. "Yes," she said slowly; "they *did* watch you. They know it, for it was they who made it the talk of the neighborhood, and that's how it came to mother's ears." She stopped, and, with a frightened look, stepped back towards the door again.

"Then *that* was why your mother" —

"Oh yes," interrupted Cherry quickly. "That was why I went over to Oakland, and

why mother forbade my walking with you again, and why she had a talk with friends about your conduct, and why she came near telling Mr. Carstone all about it until I stopped her." She checked herself — he could hardly believe his eyes — the pale, nun-like girl was absolutely blushing.

"I thank you, Miss Brooks," he said gravely, "for your thoughtfulness, although I hope I could have still proven my innocence to Mr. Carstone, even if some unknown woman tried my door by mistake, and was seen doing it. But I am pained to think that *you* could have believed me capable of so wanton and absurd an impropriety — and such a gross disrespect to your mother's house."

"But," said Cherry with childlike naïveté, "you know *you* don't think anything of such things, and that's what I told mother."

"You told your mother *that*?"

"Oh yes — I told her Tappington says it's quite common with young men. Please don't laugh — for it's very dreadful. Tappington did n't laugh when he told it to me as a warning. He was shocked."

"But, my dear Miss Brooks" —

"There — now you're angry — and that's

as bad. Are you sure you did n't know that woman?"

"Positive!"

"Yet you seemed very anxious just now that she should wait till you opened the door."

"That was perfectly natural."

"I don't think it was natural at all."

"But — according to Tappington" —

"Because my brother is very good you need not make fun of him."

"I assure you I have no such intention. But what more can I say? I give you my word that I don't know who that unlucky woman was. No doubt she may have been some nearsighted neighbor who had mistaken the house, and I dare say was as thoroughly astonished at my voice as I was at hers. Can I say more? Is it necessary for me to swear that since I have been here no woman has ever entered that door — but" —

"But who?"

"Yourself."

"I know what you mean," she said hurriedly, with her old frightened look, gliding to the outer door. "It's shameful what I've done. But I only did it because — because I had faith in you, and did n't be-

lieve what they said was true." She had already turned the lock. There were tears in her pretty eyes.

"Stop," said Herbert gently. He walked slowly towards her, and within reach of her frightened figure stopped with the timid respect of a mature and genuine passion. "You must not be seen going out of that door," he said gravely. "You must let me go first, and, when I am gone, lock the door again and go through the hall to your own room. No one must know that I was in the house when you came in at that door. Good-night."

Without offering his hand he lifted his eyes to her face. The dimples were all there — and something else. He bowed and passed out.

Ten minutes later he ostentatiously returned to the house by the front door, and proceeded up the stairs to his own room. As he cast a glance around he saw that the music-stool had been moved before the fire, evidently with the view of attracting his attention. Lying upon it, carefully folded, was the veil that she had worn. There could be no doubt that it was left there purposely. With a smile at this strange girl's last char-

acteristic act of timid but compromising recklessness, after all his precautions, he raised it tenderly to his lips, and then hastened to hide it from the reach of vulgar eyes. But had Cherry known that its temporary resting-place that night was under his pillow she might have doubted his superior caution.

When he returned from the bank the next afternoon, Cherry rapped ostentatiously at his door. "Mother wishes me to ask you," she began with a certain prim formality, which nevertheless did not preclude dimples, "if you would give us the pleasure of your company at our Church Festival to-night? There will be a concert and a collation. You could accompany us there if you cared. Our friends and Tappington's would be so glad to see you, and Dr. Stout would be delighted to make your acquaintance."

"Certainly!" said Herbert, delighted and yet astounded. "Then," he added in a lower voice, "your mother no longer believes me so dreadfully culpable?"

"Oh no," said Cherry in a hurried whisper, glancing up and down the passage; "I've been talking to her about it, and she is satisfied that it is all a jealous trick and

slander of these neighbors. Why, I told her that they had even said that *I* was that mysterious woman ; that I came that way to you because she had forbidden my seeing you openly."

"What! You dared say that?"

"Yes; don't you see? Suppose they said they *had* seen me coming in last night — *that* answers it," she said triumphantly.

"Oh, it does?" he said vacantly.

"Perfectly. So you see she's convinced that she ought to put you on the same footing as Tappington, before everybody; and then there won't be any trouble. You'll come, won't you? It won't be so *very* good. And then, I've told mother that as there have been so many street-fights, and so much talk about the Vigilance Committee lately, I ought to have somebody for an escort when I am coming home. And if you're known, you see, as one of *us*, there'll be no harm in your meeting me."

"Thank you," he said, extending his hand gratefully.

Her fingers rested a moment in his.

"Where did you put it?" she said demurely.

"It? Oh! *it's* all safe," he said quickly, but somewhat vaguely.

"But I don't call the upper drawer of your bureau safe," she returned poutingly, "where *everybody* can go. So you'll find it *now* inside the harmonium, on the key-board."

"Oh, thank you."

"It's quite natural to have left it there *accidentally* — is n't it?" she said imploringly, assisted by all her dimples. Alas! she had forgotten that he was still holding her hand. Consequently, she had not time to snatch it away and vanish, with a stifled little cry, before it had been pressed two or three times to his lips. A little ashamed of his own boldness, Herbert remained for a few moments in the doorway listening, and looking uneasily down the dark passage. Presently a slight sound came over the fanlight of Cherry's room. Could he believe his ears? The saint-like Cherry — no doubt tutored, for example's sake, by the perfect Tappington — was softly whistling.

In this simple fashion the first pages of this little idyl were quietly turned. The book might have been closed or laid aside even then. But it so chanced that Cherry was an unconscious prophet; and presently it actually became a prudential necessity for

her to have a masculine escort when she walked out. For a growing state of lawlessness and crime culminated one day the deep tocsin of the Vigilance Committee, and at its stroke fifty thousand peaceful men, reverting to the first principles of social safety, sprang to arms, assembled at their quarters, or patrolled the streets. In another hour the city of San Francisco was in the hands of a mob — the most peaceful, orderly, well organized, and temperate the world had ever known, and yet in conception as lawless, autocratic, and imperious as the conditions it opposed.

IV.

HERBERT, enrolled in the same section with his employer and one or two fellow-clerks, had participated in the meetings of the committee with the light-heartedness and irresponsibility of youth, regretting only the loss of his usual walk with Cherry and the hours that kept him from her house. He was returning from a protracted meeting one night, when the number of arrests and searching for proscribed and suspected characters had been so large as to induce fears of organized resistance and rescue, and on

reaching the foot of the hill found it already so late, that to avoid disturbing the family he resolved to enter his room directly by the door in the side street. On inserting his key in the lock it met with some resisting obstacle, which, however, yielded and apparently dropped on the mat inside. Opening the door and stepping into the perfectly dark apartment, he trod upon this object, which proved to be another key. The family must have procured it for their convenience during his absence, and after locking the door had carelessly left it in the lock. It was lucky that it had yielded so readily.

The fire had gone out. He closed the door and lit the gas, and after taking off his overcoat moved to the door leading into the passage to listen if anybody was still stirring. To his utter astonishment he found it locked. What was more remarkable — the key was also *inside*! An inexplicable feeling took possession of him. He glanced suddenly around the room, and then his eye fell upon the bed. Lying there, stretched at full length, was the recumbent figure of a man.

He was apparently in the profound sleep of utter exhaustion. The attitude of his limbs and the order of his dress — of which

only his collar and cravat had been loosened — showed that sleep must have overtaken him almost instantly. In fact, the bed was scarcely disturbed beyond the actual impress of his figure. He seemed to be a handsome, matured man of about forty; his dark straight hair was a little thinned over the temples, although his long heavy moustache was still youthful and virgin. His clothes, which were elegantly cut and of finer material than that in ordinary use, the delicacy and neatness of his linen, the whiteness of his hands, and, more particularly, a certain dissipated pallor of complexion and lines of recklessness on the brow and cheek, indicated to Herbert that the man before him was one of that desperate and suspected class — some of whose proscribed members he had been hunting — the professional gambler!

Possibly the magnetism of Herbert's intent and astonished gaze affected him. He moved slightly, half opened his eyes, said "Halloo, Tap," rubbed them again, wholly opened them, fixed them with a lazy stare on Herbert, and said:

"Now, who the devil are you?"

"I think *I* have the right to ask that

question, considering that this is my room," said Herbert sharply.

"*Your* room?"

"Yes!"

The stranger half raised himself on his elbow, glanced round the room, settled himself slowly back on the pillows, with his hands clasped lightly behind his head, dropped his eyelids, smiled, and said:

"Rats!"

"What?" demanded Herbert, with a resentful sense of sacrilege to Cherry's virgin slang.

"Well, old rats then! D'ye think I don't know this shebang? Look here, Johnny, what are you putting on all this side for, eh? What's your little game? Where's Tappington?"

"If you mean Mr. Brooks, the son of this house, who formerly lived in this room," replied Herbert, with a formal precision intended to show a doubt of the stranger's knowledge of Tappington, "you ought to know that he has left town."

"Left town!" echoed the stranger, raising himself again. "Oh, I see! getting rather too warm for him here? Humph! I ought to have thought of that. Well, you

know, he *did* take mighty big risks, anyway!" He was silent a moment, with his brows knit and a rather dangerous expression in his handsome face. "So some d—d hound gave him away — eh?"

"I had n't the pleasure of knowing Mr. Brooks except by reputation, as the respected son of the lady upon whose house you have just intruded," said Herbert frigidly, yet with a creeping consciousness of some unpleasant revelation.

The stranger stared at him for a moment, again looked carefully round the room, and then suddenly dropped his head back on the pillow, and with his white hands over his eyes and mouth tried to restrain a spasm of silent laughter. After an effort he succeeded, wiped his moist eyes, and sat up.

"So you did n't know Tappington, eh?" he said, lazily buttoning his collar.

"No."

"No more do I."

He retied his cravat, yawned, rose, shook himself perfectly neat again, and going to Herbert's dressing-table quietly took up a brush and began to lightly brush himself, occasionally turning to the window to glance out. Presently he turned to Herbert and said:

"Well, Johnny, what's your name?"

"I am Herbert Bly, of Carstone's Bank."

"So, and a member of this same Vigilance Committee, I reckon," he continued.

"Yes."

"Well, Mr. Bly, I owe you an apology for coming here, and some thanks for the only sleep I've had in forty-eight hours. I struck this old shebang at about ten o'clock, and it's now two, so I reckon I've put in about four hours' square sleep. Now, look here." He beckoned Herbert towards the window. "Do you see those three men standing under that gaslight? Well, they're part of a gang of Vigilantes who've hunted me to the hill, and are waiting to see me come out of the bushes, where they reckon I'm hiding. Go to them and say that I'm here! Tell them you've got Gentleman George — George Dornton, the man they've been hunting for a week — in this room. I promise you I won't stir, nor kick up a row, when they've come. Do it, and Carstone, if he's a square man, will raise your salary for it, and promote you." He yawned slightly, and then slowly looking around him, drew the easy-chair towards him and dropped comfortably in it, gazing at the astounded and motionless Herbert with a lazy smile.

“You’re wondering what my little game is, Johnny, ain’t you? Well, I’ll tell you. What with being hunted from pillar to post, putting my old pards to no end of trouble, and then slipping up on it whenever I think I’ve got a sure thing like this,” — he cast an almost affectionate glance at the bed, — “I’ve come to the conclusion that it’s played out, and I might as well hand in my checks. It’s only a question of my being *run out* of ’Frisco, or hiding until I can *slip out* myself; and I’ve reckoned I might as well give them the trouble and expense of transportation. And if I can put a good thing in your way in doing it — why, it will sort of make things square with you for the fuss I’ve given you.”

Even in the stupefaction and helplessness of knowing that the man before him was the notorious duellist and gambler George Dornton, one of the first marked for deportation by the Vigilance Committee, Herbert recognized all he had heard of his invincible coolness, courage, and almost philosophic fatalism. For an instant his youthful imagination checked even his indignation. When he recovered himself, he said, with rising color and boyish vehemence :

"Whoever *you* may be, I am neither a police officer nor a spy. You have no right to insult me by supposing that I would profit by the mistake that made you my guest, or that I would refuse you the sanctuary of the roof that covers your insult as well as your blunder."

The stranger gazed at him with an amused expression, and then rose and stretched out his hand.

"Shake, Mr. Bly! You're the only man that ever kicked George Dornton when he deserved it. Good-night!" He took his hat and walked to the door.

"Stop!" said Herbert impulsively; "the night is already far gone; go back and finish your sleep."

"You mean it?"

"I do."

The stranger turned, walked back to the bed, unfastening his coat and collar as he did so, and laid himself down in the attitude of a moment before.

"I will call you in the morning," continued Herbert. "By that time," — he hesitated, — "by that time your pursuers may have given up their search. One word more. You will be frank with me?"

"Go on."

"Tappington and you are — friends?"

"Well — yes."

"His mother and sister know nothing of this?"

"I reckon he did n't boast of it. *I* did n't. Is that all?" sleepily.

"Yes."

"Don't *you* worry about *him*. Good-night."

"Good-night."

But even at that moment George Dornton had dropped off in a quiet, peaceful sleep.

Bly turned down the light, and, drawing his easy-chair to the window, dropped into it in bewildering reflection. This then was the secret — unknown to mother and daughter — unsuspected by all! This was the double life of Tappington, half revealed in his flirtation with the neighbors, in the hidden cards behind the books, in the mysterious visitor — still unaccounted for — and now wholly exploded by this sleeping confederate, for whom, somehow, Herbert felt the greatest sympathy! What was to be done? What should he say to Cherry — to her mother — to Mr. Carstone? Yet he had felt he had done right. From time to time he turned to

the motionless recumbent shadow on the bed and listened to its slow and peaceful respiration. Apart from that undefinable attraction which all original natures have for each other, the thrice-blessed mystery of protection of the helpless, for the first time in his life, seemed to dawn upon him through that night.

Nevertheless, the actual dawn came slowly. Twice he nodded and awoke quickly with a start. The third time it was day. The street-lamps were extinguished, and with them the moving, restless watchers seemed also to have vanished. Suddenly a formal deliberate rapping at the door leading to the hall startled him to his feet.

It must be Ellen. So much the better ; he could quickly get rid of her. He glanced at the bed ; Dornton slept on undisturbed. He unlocked the door cautiously, and instinctively fell back before the erect, shawled, and decorous figure of Mrs. Brooks. But an utterly new resolution and excitement had supplanted the habitual resignation of her handsome features, and given them an angry sparkle of expression.

Recollecting himself, he instantly stepped forward into the passage, drawing to the

door behind him, as she, with equal celerity, opposed it with her hand.

"Mr. Bly," she said deliberately, "Ellen has just told me that your voice has been heard in conversation with some one in this room late last night. Up to this moment I have foolishly allowed my daughter to persuade me that certain infamous scandals regarding your conduct here were false. I must ask you as a gentleman to let me pass now and satisfy myself."

"But, my dear madam, one moment. Let me first explain — I beg" — stammered Herbert with a half-hysterical laugh. "I assure you a gentleman friend" —

But she had pushed him aside and entered precipitately. With a quick feminine glance round the room she turned to the bed, and then halted in overwhelming confusion.

"It's a friend," said Herbert in a hasty whisper. "A friend of mine who returned with me late, and whom, on account of the disturbed state of the streets, I induced to stay here all night. He was so tired that I have not had the heart to disturb him yet."

"Oh, pray don't! — I beg" — said Mrs. Brooks with a certain youthful vivacity, but

still gazing at the stranger's handsome features as she slowly retreated. "Not for worlds!"

Herbert was relieved; she was actually blushing.

"You see, it was quite unpremeditated, I assure you. We came in together," whispered Herbert, leading her to the door, "and I" —

"Don't believe a word of it, madam," said a lazy voice from the bed, as the stranger leisurely raised himself upright, putting the last finishing touch to his cravat as he shook himself neat again. "I'm an utter stranger to him, and he knows it. He found me here, hiding from the Vigilantes, who were chasing me on the hill. I got in at that door, which happened to be unlocked. He let me stay because he was a gentleman — and — I was n't. I beg your pardon, madam, for having interrupted him before you; but it was a little rough to have him lie on *my* account when he was n't the kind of man to lie on his *own*. You'll forgive him — won't you, please? — and, as I'm taking myself off now, perhaps you'll overlook *my* intrusion too."

It was impossible to convey the lazy

frankness of this speech, the charming smile with which it was accompanied, or the easy yet deferential manner with which, taking up his hat, he bowed to Mrs. Brooks as he advanced toward the door.

"But," said Mrs. Brooks, hurriedly glancing from Herbert to the stranger, "it must be the Vigilantes who are now hanging about the street. Ellen saw them from her window, and thought they were *your* friends, Mr. Bly. This gentleman — your friend" — she had become a little confused in her novel excitement — "really ought not to go out now. It would be madness."

"If you would n't mind his remaining a little longer, it certainly would be safer," said Herbert, with wondering gratitude.

"I certainly should n't consent to his leaving my house now," said Mrs. Brooks with dignity; "and if you would n't mind calling Cherry here, Mr. Bly — she's in the dining-room — and then showing yourself for a moment in the street and finding out what they wanted, it would be the best thing to do."

Herbert flew downstairs; in a few hurried words he gave the same explanation to the astounded Cherry that he had given to

her mother, with the mischievous addition that Mrs. Brooks's unjust suspicions had precipitated her into becoming an amicable accomplice, and then ran out into the street. Here he ascertained from one of the Vigilantes, whom he knew, that they were really seeking Dornton; but that, concluding that the fugitive had already escaped to the wharves, they expected to withdraw their surveillance at noon. Somewhat relieved, he hastened back, to find the stranger calmly seated on the sofa in the parlor with the same air of frank indifference, lazily relating the incidents of his flight to the two women, who were listening with every expression of sympathy and interest. "Poor fellow!" said Cherry, taking the astonished Bly aside into the hall, "I don't believe he's half as bad as *they* said he is — or as even *he* makes himself out to be. But *did* you notice mother?"

Herbert, a little dazed, and, it must be confessed, a trifle uneasy at this ready acceptance of the stranger, abstractedly said he had not.

"Why, it's the most ridiculous thing. She's actually going round *without her shawl*, and does n't seem to know it."

V.

WHEN Herbert finally reached the bank that morning he was still in a state of doubt and perplexity. He had parted with his grateful visitor, whose safety in a few hours seemed assured, but without the least further revelation or actual allusion to anything antecedent to his selecting Tappington's room as refuge. More than that, Herbert was convinced from his manner that he had no intention of making a confidant of Mrs. Brooks, and this convinced him that Dorn-ton's previous relations with Tappington were not only utterly inconsistent with that young man's decorous reputation, but were unsuspected by the family. The stranger's familiar knowledge of the room, his mysterious allusions to the "risks" Tappington had taken, and his sudden silence on the discovery of Bly's ignorance of the whole affair — all pointed to some secret that, innocent or not, was more or less perilous, not only to the son but to the mother and sister. Of the latter's ignorance he had no doubt — but had he any right to enlighten them? Admitting that Tappington had deceived

them with the others, would they thank him for opening their eyes to it? If they had already a suspicion, would they care to know that it was shared by him? Halting between his frankness and his delicacy, the final thought that in his budding relations with the daughter it might seem a cruel bid for her confidence, or a revenge for their distrust of him, inclined him to silence. But an unforeseen occurrence took the matter from his hands. At noon he was told that Mr. Carstone wished to see him in his private room!

Satisfied that his complicity with Dorn-ton's escape was discovered, the unfortunate Herbert presented himself, pale but self-possessed, before his employer. That brief man of business bade him be seated, and standing himself before the fireplace, looked down curiously, but not unkindly, upon his employee.

"Mr. Bly, the bank does not usually interfere with the private affairs of its employees, but for certain reasons which I prefer to explain to you later, I must ask you to give me a straightforward answer to one or two questions. I may say that they have nothing to do with your relations to the bank, which are to us perfectly satisfactory."

More than ever convinced that Mr. Carstone was about to speak of his visitor, Herbert signified his willingness to reply.

"You have been seen a great deal with Miss Brooks lately — on the street and elsewhere — acting as her escort, and evidently on terms of intimacy. To do you both justice, neither of you seemed to have made it a secret or avoided observation; but I must ask you directly if it is with her mother's permission?"

Considerably relieved, but wondering what was coming, Herbert answered, with boyish frankness, that it was.

"Are you — engaged to the young lady?"

"No, sir."

"Are you — well, Mr. Bly — briefly, are you what is called 'in love' with her?" asked the banker, with a certain brusque hurrying over of a sentiment evidently incompatible with their present business surroundings.

Herbert blushed. It was the first time he had heard the question voiced, even by himself.

"I am," he said resolutely.

"And you wish to marry her?"

"If I dared ask her to accept a young

man with no position as yet," stammered Herbert.

"People don't usually consider a young man in Carstone's Bank of no position," said the banker dryly; "and I wish for your sake *that* were the only impediment. For I am compelled to reveal to you a secret." He paused, and folding his arms, looked fixedly down upon his clerk. "Mr. Bly, Tappington Brooks, the brother of your sweetheart, was a defaulter and embezzler from this bank!"

Herbert sat dumfounded and motionless.

"Understand two things," continued Mr. Carstone quickly. "First, that no purer or better women exist than Miss Brooks and her mother. Secondly, that they know nothing of this, and that only myself and one other man are in possession of the secret."

He slightly changed his position, and went on more deliberately. "Six weeks ago Tappington sat in that chair where you are sitting now, a convicted hypocrite and thief. Luckily for him, although his guilt was plain, and the whole secret of his double life revealed to me, a sum of money advanced in pity by one of his gambling confederates had made his accounts good and saved him from

suspicion in the eyes of his fellow-clerks and my partners. At first he tried to fight me on that point; then he blustered and said his mother could have refunded the money; and asked me what was a paltry five thousand dollars! I told him, Mr. Bly, that it might be five years of his youth in state prison; that it might be five years of sorrow and shame for his mother and sister; that it might be an everlasting stain on the name of his dead father — my friend. He talked of killing himself: I told him he was a cowardly fool. He asked me to give him up to the authorities: I told him I intended to take the law in my own hands and give him another chance; and then he broke down. I transferred him that very day, without giving him time to communicate with anybody, to our branch office at Portland, with a letter explaining his position to our agent, and the injunction that for six months he should be under strict surveillance. I myself undertook to explain his sudden departure to Mrs. Brooks, and obliged him to write to her from time to time." He paused, and then continued: "So far I believe my plan has been successful: the secret has been kept; he has broken with the evil associates

that ruined him here — to the best of my knowledge he has had no communication with them since; even a certain woman here who shared his vicious hidden life has abandoned him."

"Are you sure?" asked Herbert involuntarily, as he recalled his mysterious visitor.

"I believe the Vigilance Committee has considered it a public duty to deport her and her confederates beyond the State," returned Carstone dryly.

Another idea flashed upon Herbert. "And the gambler who advanced the money to save Tappington?" he said breathlessly.

"Was n't such a hound as the rest of his kind, if report says true," answered Carstone. "He was well known here as George Dornton — Gentleman George — a man capable of better things. But he was before your time, Mr. Bly — *you* don't know him."

Herbert did n't deem it a felicitous moment to correct his employer, and Mr. Carstone continued: "I have now told you what I thought it was my duty to tell you. I must leave *you* to judge how far it affects your relations with Miss Brooks."

Herbert did not hesitate. "I should be very sorry, sir, to seem to undervalue your

consideration or disregard your warning ; but I am afraid that even if you had been less merciful to Tappington, and he were now a convicted felon, I should change neither my feelings nor my intentions to his sister."

"And you would still marry her?" said Carstone sternly ; "you, an employee of the bank, would set the example of allying yourself with one who had robbed it?"

"I — am afraid I would, sir," said Herbert slowly.

"Even if it were a question of your remaining here?" said Carstone grimly.

Poor Herbert already saw himself dismissed and again taking up his weary quest for employment ; but, nevertheless, he answered stoutly :

"Yes, sir."

"And nothing will prevent you marrying Miss Brooks?"

"Nothing — save my inability to support her."

"Then," said Mr. Carstone, with a peculiar light in his eyes, "it only remains for the bank to mark its opinion of your conduct by *increasing your salary to enable you to do so!* Shake hands, Mr. Bly," he

said, laughing. "I think you'll do to tie to — and I believe the young lady will be of the same opinion. But not a word to either her or her mother in regard to what you have heard. And now I may tell you something more. I am not without hope of Tappington's future, nor — d—n it! — without some excuse for his fault, sir. He was artificially brought up. When my old friend died, Mrs. Brooks, still a handsome woman, like all her sex would n't rest until she had another devotion, and wrapped herself and her children up in the Church. Theology may be all right for grown people, but it's apt to make children artificial; and Tappington was pious before he was fairly good. He drew on a religious credit before he had a moral capital behind it. He was brought up with no knowledge of the world, and when he went into it — it captured him. I don't say there are not saints born into the world occasionally; but for every one you'll find a lot of promiscuous human nature. My old friend Josh Brooks had a heap of it, and it would n't be strange if some was left in his children, and burst through their straight-lacing in a queer way. That's all! Good-morning, Mr. Bly. Forget what I've

told you for six months, and then I should n't wonder if Tappington was on hand to give his sister away."

Mr. Carstone's prophecy was but half realized. At the end of six months Herbert Bly's discretion and devotion were duly rewarded by Cherry's hand. But Tappington did *not* give her away. That saintly prodigal passed his period of probation with exemplary rectitude, but, either from a dread of old temptation, or some unexplained reason, he preferred to remain in Portland, and his fastidious nest on Telegraph Hill knew him no more. The key of the little door on the side street passed, naturally, into the keeping of Mrs. Bly.

Whether the secret of Tappington's double life was ever revealed to the two women is not known to the chronicler. Mrs. Bly is reported to have said that the climate of Oregon was more suited to her brother's delicate constitution than the damp fogs of San Francisco, and that his tastes were always opposed to the mere frivolity of metropolitan society. The only possible reason for supposing that the mother may have become cognizant of her son's youthful errors was in

the occasional visits to the house of the handsome George Dornton, who, in the social revolution that followed the brief reign of the Vigilance Committee, characteristically returned as a dashing stockbroker, and the fact that Mrs. Brooks seemed to have discarded her ascetic shawl forever. But as all this was contemporaneous with the absurd rumor, that owing to the loneliness induced by the marriage of her daughter she contemplated a similar change in her own condition, it is deemed unworthy the serious consideration of this veracious chronicle.

CAPTAIN JIM'S FRIEND.



I.

HARDLY one of us, I think, really believed in the auriferous probabilities of Eureka Gulch. Following a little stream, we had had one day drifted into it, very much as we imagined the river gold might have done in remoter ages, with the difference that *we* remained there, while the river gold to all appearances had not. At first it was tacitly agreed to ignore this fact, and we made the most of the charming locality, with its rare watercourse that lost itself in tangled depths of manzanita and alder, its laurel-choked pass, its flower-strewn hillside, and its summit crested with rocking pines.

"You see," said the optimistic Rowley, "water's the main thing after all. If we happen to strike river gold, thar's the stream for washing it; if we happen to drop into quartz — and that thar rock locks mighty

likely — thar ain't a more natural-born site for a mill than that right bank, with water enough to run fifty stamps. That hillside is an original dump for your tailings, and a ready found inclined road for your trucks, fresh from the hands of Providence; and that road we 're kalkilatin' to build to the turn-pike will run just easy along that ridge."

Later, when we were forced to accept the fact that finding gold was really the primary object of a gold-mining company, we still remained there, excusing our youthful laziness and incertitude by brilliant and effective sarcasms upon the unremunerative attractions of the gulch. Nevertheless, when Captain Jim, returning one day from the nearest settlement and post-office, twenty miles away, burst upon us with "Well, the hull thing 'll be settled now, boys; Lacy Bassett is coming down yer to look round," we felt considerably relieved.

And yet, perhaps, we had as little reason for it as we had for remaining there. There was no warrant for any belief in the special divining power of the unknown Lacy Bassett, except Captain Jim's extravagant faith in his general superiority, and even that had always been a source of amused skepticism

to the camp. We were already impatiently familiar with the opinions of this unseen oracle; he was always impending in Captain Jim's speech as a fragrant memory or an unquestioned authority. When Captain Jim began, "Ez Lacy was one day tellin' me," or, "Ez Lacy Bassett allows," or more formally, when strangers were present, "Ez a partickler friend o' mine, Lacy Bassett — maybe ez you know him — sez," the youthful and lighter members of the Eureka Mining Company glanced at each other in furtive enjoyment. Nevertheless no one looked more eagerly forward to the arrival of this apocryphal sage than these indolent skeptics. It was at least an excitement; they were equally ready to accept his condemnation of the locality or his justification of their original selection.

He came. He was received by the Eureka Mining Company lying on their backs on the grassy site of the prospective quartz mill, not far from the equally hypothetical "slide" to the gulch. He came by the future stage road — at present a thickset jungle of scrub-oaks and ferns. He was accompanied by Captain Jim, who had gone to meet him on the trail, and for a few moments all critical

inspection of himself was withheld by the extraordinary effect he seemed to have upon the faculties of his introducer.

Anything like the absolute prepossession of Captain Jim by this stranger we had never imagined. He approached us running a little ahead of his guest, and now and then returning assuringly to his side with the expression of a devoted Newfoundland dog, which in fluffiness he generally resembled. And now, even after the introduction was over, when he made a point of standing aside in an affectation of carelessness, with his hands in his pockets, the simulation was so apparent, and his consciousness and absorption in his friend so obvious, that it was a relief to us to recall him into the conversation.

As to our own first impressions of the stranger, they were probably correct. We all disliked him; we thought him conceited, self-opinionated, selfish, and untrustworthy. But later, reflecting that this was possibly the result of Captain Jim's over-praise, and finding none of these qualities as yet offensively opposed to our own selfishness and conceit, we were induced, like many others, to forget our first impressions. We could

easily correct him if he attempted to impose upon *us*, as he evidently had upon Captain Jim. Believing, after the fashion of most humanity, that there was something about *us* particularly awe-inspiring and edifying to vice or weakness of any kind, we good-humoredly yielded to the cheap fascination of this showy, self-saturated, over-dressed, and underbred stranger. Even the epithet of "blower" as applied to him by Rowley had its mitigations; in that Trajan community a bully was not necessarily a coward, nor florid demonstration always a weakness.

His condemnation of the gulch was sweeping, original, and striking. He laughed to scorn our half-hearted theory of a gold deposit in the bed and bars of our favorite stream. We were not to look for auriferous alluvium in the bed of any present existing stream, but in the "cement" or dried-up bed of the original prehistoric rivers that formerly ran parallel with the present bed, and which — he demonstrated with the stem of Pickney's pipe in the red dust — could be found by sinking shafts at right angles with the stream. The theory was to us, at that time, novel and attractive. It was true that the scientific explanation, although full and gra-

tuitous, sounded vague and incoherent. It was true that the geological terms were not always correct, and their pronunciation defective, but we accepted such extraordinary discoveries as "ignus fatuus rock," "splendiferous drift," "mica twist" (recalling a popular species of tobacco), "iron pirates," and "discomposed quartz" as part of what he not inaptly called a "tautological formation," and were happy. Nor was our contentment marred by the fact that the well-known scientific authority with whom the stranger had been intimate, — to the point of "sleeping together" during a survey, — and whom he described as a bent old man with spectacles, must have aged considerably since one of our party saw him three years before as a keen young fellow of twenty-five. Inaccuracies like those were only the carelessness of genius. "That's my opinion, gentlemen," he concluded, negligently rising, and with pointed preoccupation whipping the dust of Eureka Gulch from his clothes with his handkerchief, "but of course it ain't nothin' to me."

Captain Jim, who had followed every word with deep and trustful absorption, here repeated, "It ain't nothing to him, boys,"

with a confidential implication of the gratuitous blessing we had received, and then added, with loyal encouragement to him, "It ain't nothing to you, Lacy, in course," and laid his hand on his shoulder with infinite tenderness.

We, however, endeavored to make it something to Mr. Lacy Bassett. He was spontaneously offered a share in the company and a part of Captain Jim's tent. He accepted both after a few deprecating and muttered asides to Captain Jim, which the latter afterwards explained to us was the giving up of several other important enterprises for our sake. When he finally strolled away with Rowley to look over the gulch, Captain Jim reluctantly tore himself away from him only for the pleasure of reiterating his praise to us as if in strictest confidence and as an entirely novel proceeding.

"You see, boys, I didn't like to say it afore *him*, we bein' old friends; but, between us, that young feller ez worth thousands to the camp. Mebbe," he continued with grave naïveté, "I ain't said much about him afore, mebbe, bein' old friends and accustomed to him — you know how it is, boys, — I haven't appreciated him as much ez

I ought, and ez you do. In fact, I don't ezakly remember how I kem to ask him down yer. It came to me suddent, one day only a week ago Friday night, thar under that buck-eye; I was thinkin' o' one of his sayins, and sez I — thar 's Lacy, if he was here he'd set the hull thing right. It was the ghost of a chance my findin' him free, but I did. And there *he* is, and yer *we* are settled! Ye noticed how he just knocked the bottom outer our plans to work. Ye noticed that quick sort o' sneerin' smile o' his, did n't ye — that's Lacy! I've seen him knock over a heap o' things without sayin' anythin' — with jist that smile."

It occurred to us that we might have some difficulty in utilizing this smile in our present affairs, and that we should have probably preferred something more assuring, but Captain Jim's faith was contagious.

"What is he, anyway?" asked Joe Walker lazily.

"Eh!" echoed Captain Jim in astonishment. "What is Lacy Bassett?"

"Yes, what is he?" repeated Walker.

"Wot *is* — he?"

"Yes."

"I've knowed him now goin' as four

year," said Captain Jim with slow reflective contentment. "Let's see. It was in the fall o' '54 I first met him, and he's allus been the same ez you see him now."

"But what is his business or profession? What does he do?"

Captain Jim looked reproachfully at his questioner.

"Do?" he repeated, turning to the rest of us as if disdaining a direct reply. "Do? — why, wot he's doin' now. He's allus the same, allus Lacy Bassett."

Howbeit, we went to work the next day under the superintendence of the stranger with youthful and enthusiastic energy, and began the sinking of a shaft at once. To do Captain Jim's friend justice, for the first few weeks he did not shirk a fair share of the actual labor, replacing his objectionable and unsuitable finery with a suit of serviceable working clothes got together by general contribution of the camp, and assuring us of a fact we afterwards had cause to remember, that "he brought nothing but himself into Eureka Gulch." It may be added that he certainly had not brought money there, as Captain Jim advanced the small amounts necessary for his purchases in the distant

settlement, and for the still smaller sums he lost at cards, which he played with characteristic self-sufficiency.

Meantime the work in the shaft progressed slowly but regularly. Even when the novelty had worn off and the excitement of anticipation grew fainter, I am afraid that we clung to this new form of occupation as an apology for remaining there; for the fascinations of our vagabond and unconventional life were more potent than we dreamed of. We were slowly fettered by our very freedom; there was a strange spell in this very boundlessness of our license that kept us from even the desire of change; in the wild and lawless arms of nature herself we found an embrace as clinging, as hopeless and restraining, as the civilization from which we had fled. We were quite content after a few hours' work in the shaft to lie on our backs on the hillside staring at the unwinking sky, or to wander with a gun through the virgin forest in search of game scarcely less vagabond than ourselves. We indulged in the most extravagant and dreamy speculations of the fortune we should eventually discover in the shaft, and believed that we were practical. We broke our "saleratus

bread" with appetites unimpaired by restlessness or anxiety; we went to sleep under the grave and sedate stars with a serene consciousness of having fairly earned our rest; we awoke the next morning with unabated trustfulness, and a sweet obliviousness of even the hypothetical fortunes we had perhaps won or lost at cards overnight. We paid no heed to the fact that our little capital was slowly sinking with the shaft, and that the rainy season — wherein not only "no man could work," but even such play as ours was impossible — was momentarily impending.

In the midst of this, one day Lacy Bassett suddenly emerged from the shaft before his "shift" of labor was over with every sign of disgust and rage in his face and inarticulate with apparent passion. In vain we gathered round him in concern; in vain Captain Jim regarded him with almost feminine sympathy, as he flung away his pick and dashed his hat to the ground.

"What's up, Lacy, old pard? What's gone o' you?" said Captain Jim tenderly.

"Look!" gasped Lacy at last, when every eye was on him, holding up a small fragment of rock before us and the next moment

grinding it under his heel in rage. "Look! To think that I've been fooled agin by this blanked fossiliferous trap — blank it! To think that after me and Professor Parker was once caught jist in this way up on the Stanislaus at the bottom of a hundred-foot shaft by this rotten trap — that yer I am — bluffed agin!"

There was a dead silence; we looked at each other blankly.

"But, Bassett," said Walker, picking up a part of the fragment, "we've been finding this kind of stuff for the last two weeks."

"But how?" returned Lacy, turning upon him almost fiercely. "Did ye find it superposed on quartz, or did you find it *not* superposed on quartz? Did you find it in volcanic drift, or did ye find it in old red-sandstone or coarse illuvion? Tell me that, and then ye kin talk. But this yer blank fossiliferous trap, instead o' being superposed on top, is superposed on the bottom. And that means" —

"What?" we all asked eagerly.

"Why — blank it all — that this yer convulsion of nature, this prehistoric volcanic earthquake, instead of acting laterally and chuckin' the stream to one side, has been

revolutionary and turned the old river-bed bottom-side up, and yer d—d cement hez got half the globe atop of it! Ye might strike it from China, but nowhere else."

We continued to look at one another, the older members with darkening faces, the younger with a strong inclination to laugh. Captain Jim, who had been concerned only in his friend's emotion, and who was hanging with undisguised satisfaction on these final convincing proofs of his superior geological knowledge, murmured approvingly and confidingly, "He's right, boys! Thar ain't another man livin' ez could give you the law and gospil like that! Ye can tie to what he says. That's Lacy all over."

Two weeks passed. We had gathered, damp and disconsolate, in the only available shelter of the camp. For the long summer had ended unexpectedly to us; we had one day found ourselves caught like the improvident insect of the child's fable with gauzy and unseasonable wings wet and bedraggled in the first rains, homeless and hopeless. The scientific Lacy, who lately spent most of his time as a bar-room oracle in the settlement, was away, and from our dripping canvas we could see Captain Jim returning

from a visit to him, slowly plodding along the trail towards us.

"It's no use, boys," said Rowley, summarizing the result of our conference, "we must speak out to him, and if nobody else cares to do it I will. I don't know why we should be more mealy-mouthed than they are at the settlement. They don't hesitate to call Bassett a dead-beat, whatever Captain Jim says to the contrary."

The unfortunate Captain Jim had halted irresolutely before the gloomy faces in the shelter. Whether he felt instinctively some forewarning of what was coming I cannot say. There was a certain dog-like consciousness in his eye and a half-backward glance over his shoulder as if he were not quite certain that Lacy was not following. The rain had somewhat subdued his characteristic fluffiness, and he cowered with a kind of sleek storm-beaten despondency over the smoking fire of green wood before our tent.

Nevertheless, Rowley opened upon him with a directness and decision that astonished us. He pointed out briefly that Lacy Bassett had been known to us only through Captain Jim's introduction. That he had been originally invited there on Captain

Jim's own account, and that his later connection with the company had been wholly the result of Captain Jim's statements. That, far from being any aid or assistance to them, Bassett had beguiled them by apocryphal knowledge and sham scientific theories into an expensive and gigantic piece of folly. That, in addition to this, they had just discovered that he had also been using the credit of the company for his own individual expenses at the settlement while they were working on his d—d fool shaft—all of which had brought them to the verge of bankruptcy. That, as a result, they were forced now to demand his resignation—not only on their general account, but for Captain Jim's sake—believing firmly, as they did, that he had been as grossly deceived in his friendship for Lacy Bassett as *they* were in their business relations with him.

Instead of being mollified by this, Captain Jim, to our greater astonishment, suddenly turned upon the speaker, bristling with his old canine suggestion.

“There! I said so! Go on! I'd have sworn to it afore you opened your lips. I knowed it the day you sneaked around and wanted to know wot his business was! I

said to myself, Cap, look out for that sneakin' hound Rowley, he's no friend o' Lacy's. And the day Lacy so far demeaned himself as to give ye that splendid explanation o' things, I watched ye; ye did n't think it, but I watched ye. Ye can't fool me! I saw ye lookin' at Walker there, and I said to myself, Wot's the use, Lacy, wot's the use o' your slingin' them words to such as *them*? Wot do *they* know? It's just their pure jealousy and ignorance. Ef you'd come down yer, and lazed around with us and fallen into our common ways, you'd ha' been ez good a man ez the next. But no, it ain't your style, Lacy, you're accustomed to high-toned men like Professor Parker, and you can't help showing it. No wonder you took to avoidin' us; no wonder I've had to foller you over the Burnt Wood Crossin' time and again, to get to see ye. I see it all now: ye can't stand the kempany I brought ye to! Ye had to wipe the slum gullion of Eureka Gulch off your hands, Lacy" — He stopped, gasped for breath, and then lifted his voice more savagely, "And now, what's this? Wot's this hogwash? this yer lyin' slander about his gettin' things on the kempany's credit? Eh, speak up, some of ye!"

We were so utterly shocked and stupefied at the degradation of this sudden and unexpected outburst from a man usually so honorable, gentle, self-sacrificing, and forgiving, that we forgot the cause of it and could only stare at each other. What was this cheap stranger, with his shallow swindling tricks, to the ignoble change he had worked upon the man before us. Rowley and Walker, both fearless fighters and quick to resent an insult, only averted their saddened faces and turned aside without a word.

"Ye dussen't say it! Well, hark to me then," he continued with white and feverish lips. "*I* put him up to helpin' himself. *I* told him to use the kempany's name for credit. Ye kin put that down to *me*. And when ye talk of *his* resigning, I want ye to understand that *I* resign outer this rotten kempany and *take him with me!* Ef all the gold yer lookin' for was piled up in that shaft from its bottom in hell to its top in the gulch, it ain't enough to keep me here away from him! Ye kin take all my share — all *my* rights yer above ground and below it — all I carry," — he threw his buckskin purse and revolver on the ground, — "and pay yourselves what you reckon you've lost

through *him*. But you and me is quits from to-day."

He strode away before a restraining voice or hand could reach him. His dripping figure seemed to melt into the rain beneath the thickening shadows of the pines, and the next moment he was gone. From that day forward Eureka Gulch knew him no more. And the camp itself somehow melted away during the rainy season, even as he had done.

II.

THREE years had passed. The pioneer stage-coach was sweeping down the long descent to the pastoral valley of Gilead, and I was looking towards the village with some pardonable interest and anxiety. For I carried in my pocket my letters of promotion from the box seat of the coach—where I had performed the functions of treasure messenger for the Excelsior Express Company—to the resident agency of that company in the bucolic hamlet before me. The few dusty right-angled streets, with their rigid and staringly new shops and dwellings, the stern formality of one or two obelisk-like meeting-house spires, the illimitable out-

lying plains of wheat and wild oats beyond, with their monotony scarcely broken by skeleton stockades, corrals, and barrack-looking farm buildings, were all certainly unlike the unkempt freedom of the mountain fastnesses in which I had lately lived and moved. Yuba Bill, the driver, whose usual expression of humorous discontent deepened into scorn as he gathered up his reins as if to charge the village and recklessly sweep it from his path, indicated a huge, rambling, obtrusively glazed, and capital-lettered building with a contemptuous flick of his whip as we passed. "Ef you're kalkilatin' we'll get our partin' drink there you're mistaken. That's wot they call a *temperance house* — wot means a place where the licker ye get underhand is only a trifle worse than the hash ye get above-board. I suppose it's part o' one o' the mysteries o' Providence that wharever you find a dusty hole like this — that's naturally *thirsty* — ye run agin a 'temperance' house. But never *you* mind! I should n't wonder if thar was a demijohn o' whiskey in the closet of your back office, kept thar by the feller you're relievin' — who was a white man and knew the ropes."

A few minutes later, when my brief in-

stallation was over, we *did* find the demijohn in the place indicated. As Yuba Bill wiped his mouth with the back of his heavy buckskin glove, he turned to me not unkindly. "I don't like to set ye agin Gilead, which is a scrip-too-rural place, and a God-fearin' place, and a nice dry place, and a place ez I've heard tell whar they grow beans and pertatoes and garden sass; but afore three weeks is over, old pard, you'll be howlin' to get back on that box seat with me, whar you uster sit, and be ready to take your chances agin, like a little man, to get drilled through with buckshot from road agents. You hear me! I'll give you three weeks, sonny, just three weeks, to get your butes full o' hayseed and straws in yer har; and I'll find ye wadin' the North Fork at high water to get out o' this." He shook my hand with grim tenderness, removing his glove — a rare favor — to give me the pressure of his large, soft, protecting palm, and strode away. The next moment he was shaking the white dust of Gilead from his scornful chariot-wheels.

In the hope of familiarizing myself with the local interests of the community, I took up a copy of the "Gilead Guardian" which

lay on my desk, forgetting for the moment the usual custom of the country press to displace local news for long editorials on foreign subjects and national politics. I found, to my disappointment, that the "Guardian" exhibited more than the usual dearth of domestic intelligence, although it was singularly oracular on "The State of Europe," and "Jeffersonian Democracy." A certain cheap assurance, a copy-book dogmatism, a colloquial familiarity, even in the impersonal plural, and a series of inaccuracies and blunders here and there, struck some old chord in my memory. I was mutely wondering where and when I had become personally familiar with rhetoric like that, when the door of the office opened and a man entered. I was surprised to recognize Captain Jim.

I had not seen him since he had indignantly left us, three years before, in Eureka Gulch. The circumstances of his defection were certainly not conducive to any voluntary renewal of friendship on either side; and although, even as a former member of the Eureka Mining Company, I was not conscious of retaining any sense of injury, yet the whole occurrence flashed back upon me with awkward distinctness. To my relief,

however, he greeted me with his old cordiality ; to my amusement he added to it a suggestion of the large forgiveness of conscious rectitude and amiable toleration. I thought, however, I detected, as he glanced at the paper which was still in my hand and then back again at my face, the same uneasy canine resemblance I remembered of old. He had changed but little in appearance ; perhaps he was a trifle stouter, more mature, and slower in his movements. If I may return to my canine illustration, his grayer, dustier, and more wiry *ensemble* gave me the impression that certain pastoral and agricultural conditions had varied his type, and he looked more like a shepherd's dog in whose brown eyes there was an abiding consciousness of the care of straying sheep, and possibly of one black one in particular.

He had, he told me, abandoned mining and taken up farming on a rather large scale. He had prospered. He had other interests at stake, "A flour-mill with some improvements — and — and" — here his eyes wandered to the "Guardian" again, and he asked me somewhat abruptly what I thought of the paper. Something impelled me to restrain my previous fuller criticism,

and I contented myself by saying briefly that I thought it rather ambitious for the locality. "That's the word," he said with a look of gratified relief, "'ambitious' — you've just hit it. And what's the matter with that? Ye kan't expect a high-toned man to write down to the level of every karpin' hound, ken ye now? That's what he says to me" — He stopped half confused, and then added abruptly: "That's one o' my investments."

"Why, Captain Jim, I never suspected that you" —

"Oh, I don't *write* it," he interrupted hastily. "I only furnish the money and the advertising, and run it gin'rally, you know; and I'm responsible for it. And I select the eddyter — and" — he continued, with a return of the same uneasy wistful look — "thar's suthin' in that, you know, eh?"

I was beginning to be perplexed. The memory evoked by the style of the editorial writing and the presence of Captain Jim was assuming a suspicious relationship to each other. "And who's your editor?" I asked.

"Oh, he's — he's — er — Lacy Bassett," he replied, blinking his eyes with a hopeless

assumption of carelessness. "Let's see! Oh yes! You knowed Lacy down there at Eureka. I disremembered it till now. Yes, sir!" he repeated suddenly and almost rudely, as if to preclude any adverse criticism, "he's the eddyter!"

To my surprise he was quite white and tremulous with nervousness. I was very sorry for him, and as I really cared very little for the half-forgotten escapade of his friend except so far as it seemed to render *him* sensitive, I shook his hand again heartily and began to talk of our old life in the gulch — avoiding as far as possible any allusion to Lacy Bassett. His face brightened; his old simple cordiality and trustfulness returned, but unfortunately with it his old disposition to refer to Bassett. "Yes, they waz high old times, and ez I waz sayin' to Lacy on'y yesterday, there is a kind o' freedom 'bout that sort o' life that runs civilization and noospapers mighty hard, however high-toned they is. Not but what Lacy ain't right," he added quickly, "when he sez that the opposition the 'Guardian' gets here comes from ignorant low-down fellers ez wos brought up in played-out camps, and can't tell a gentleman and a scholar and a scien-

tific man when they sees him. No! So I sez to Lacy, 'Never you mind, it's high time they did, and they've got to do it and to swaller the "Guardian," if I sink double the money I've already put into the paper.'"

I was not long in discovering from other sources that the "Guardian" was not popular with the more intelligent readers of Gilead, and that Captain Jim's extravagant estimate of his friend was by no means indorsed by the community. But criticism took a humorous turn even in that practical settlement, and it appeared that Lacy Bassett's vanity, assumption, and ignorance were an unfailing and weekly joy to the critical, in spite of the vague distrust they induced in the more homely-witted, and the dull acquiescence of that minority who accepted the paper for its respectable exterior and advertisements. I was somewhat grieved, however, to find that Captain Jim shared equally with his friend in this general verdict of incompetency, and that some of the most outrageous blunders were put down to *him*. But I was not prepared to believe that Lacy had directly or by innuendo helped the public to this opinion.

Whether through accident or design on

his part, Lacy Bassett did not personally obtrude himself upon my remembrance until a month later. One dazzling afternoon, when the dust and heat had driven the pride of Gilead's manhood into the surreptitious shadows of the temperance hotel's back room, and had even cleared the express office of its loungers, and left me alone with darkened windows in the private office, the outer door opened and Captain Jim's friend entered as part of that garish glitter I had shut out. To do the scamp strict justice, however, he was somewhat subdued in his dress and manner, and, possibly through some gentle chastening of epigram and revolver since I had seen him last, was less aggressive and exaggerated. I had the impression, from certain odors wafted through the apartment and a peculiar physical exaltation that was inconsistent with his evident moral hesitancy, that he had prepared himself for the interview by a previous visit to the hidden fountains of the temperance hotel.

"We don't seem to have run agin each other since you've been here," he said with an assurance that was nevertheless a trifle forced, "but I reckon we're both busy men,

and there's a heap too much loafing goin' on in Gilead. Captain Jim told me he met you the day you arrived; said you just cottoned to the 'Guardian' at once and thought it a deal too good for Gilead; eh? Oh, well, jest ez likely he *did n't* say it — it was only his gassin'. He's a queer man — is Captain Jim."

I replied somewhat sharply that I considered him a very honest man, a very simple man, and a very loyal man.

"That's all very well," said Bassett, twirling his cane with a patronizing smile, "but, as his friend, don't you find him considerable of a darned fool?"

I could not help retorting that I thought *he* had found that hardly an objection.

"*You* think so," he said querulously, apparently ignoring everything but the practical fact, — "and maybe others do; but that's where you're mistaken. It don't pay. It may pay *him* to be runnin' me as his particular friend, to be quotin' me here and there, to be gettin' credit of knowin' me and my friends and ownin' me — by Gosh! but I don't see where the benefit to *me* comes in. Eh? Take your own case down there at Eureka Gulch; did n't he send for me just to

show me up to you fellers? Did I want to have anything to do with the Eureka Company? Did n't he set me up to give my opinion about that shaft just to show off what I knew about science and all that? And what did he get me to join the company for? Was it for you? No! Was it for me? No! It was just to keep me there for *himself*, and kinder pit me agin you fellers and crow over you! Now that ain't my style! It may be *his* — it may be honest and simple and loyal, as you say, and it may be all right for him to get me to run up accounts at the settlement and then throw off on me — but it ain't my style. I suppose he let on that I did that. No? He did n't? Well then, why did he want to run me off with him, and cut the whole concern in an underhand way and make me leave with nary a character behind me, eh? Now, I never said anything about this before — did I? It ain't like me. I would n't have said anything about it now, only you talked about *my* being benefited by his darned foolishness. Much I've made outer *him*."

Despicable, false, and disloyal as this was, perhaps it was the crowning meanness of such confidences that his very weakness

seemed only a reflection of Captain Jim's own, and appeared in some strange way to degrade his friend as much as himself. The simplicity of his vanity and selfishness was only equalled by the simplicity of Captain Jim's admiration of it. It was a part of my youthful inexperience of humanity that I was not above the common fallacy of believing that a man is "known by the company he keeps," and that he is in a manner responsible for its weakness; it was a part of that humanity that I felt no surprise in being more amused than shocked by this revelation. It seemed a good joke on Captain Jim!

"Of course *you* kin laugh at his darned foolishness; but, by Gosh, it ain't a laughing matter to me!"

"But surely he's given you a good position on the 'Guardian,'" I urged. "That was disinterested, certainly."

"Was it? I call that the cheekiest thing yet. When he found he couldn't make enough of me in private life, he totes me out in public as *his* editor — the man who runs *his* paper! And has his name in print as the proprietor, the only chance he'd ever get of being before the public. And don't know the whole town is laughing at him!"

"That may be because they think *he* writes some of the articles," I suggested.

Again the insinuation glanced harmlessly from his vanity. "That could n't be, because *I* do all the work, and it ain't his style," he said with naïve discontent. "And it's always the highest style, done to please him, though between you and me it's sorter castin' pearls before swine — this 'Frisco editing — and the public would be just as satisfied with anything I could rattle off that was peart and sassy, — something spicy or personal. I'm willing to climb down and do it, for there's nothin' stuck-up about me, you know; but that darned fool Captain Jim has got the big head about the style of the paper, and darned if I don't think he's afraid if there's a lettin' down, people may think it's him! Ez if! Why, you know as well as me that there's a sort of snap *I* could give these things that would show it was me and no slouch did them, in a minute."

I had my doubts about the elegance or playfulness of Mr. Bassett's trifling, but from some paragraphs that appeared in the next issue of the "Guardian" I judged that he had won over Captain Jim — if indeed that gentleman's alleged objections were not

entirely the outcome of Bassett's fancy. The social paragraphs themselves were clumsy and vulgar. A dull-witted account of a select party at Parson Baxter's, with a point-blank compliment to Polly Baxter his daughter, might have made her pretty cheek burn but for her evident prepossession for the meretricious scamp, its writer. But even this horse-play seemed more natural than the utterly artificial editorials with their pinchbeck glitter and cheap erudition; and thus far it appeared harmless.

I grieve to say that these appearances were deceptive. One afternoon, as I was returning from a business visit to the outskirts of the village, I was amazed on reëntering the main street to find a crowd collected around the "Guardian" office, gazing at the broken glass of its windows and a quantity of type scattered on the ground. But my attention was at that moment more urgently attracted by a similar group around my own office, who, however, seemed more cautious, and were holding timorously aloof from the entrance. As I ran rapidly towards them, a few called out, "Look out — he's in there!" while others made way to let me pass. With the impression of fire or robbery in my mind,

I entered precipitately, only to find Yuba Bill calmly leaning back in an arm-chair with his feet on the back of another, a glass of whiskey from my demijohn in one hand and a huge cigar in his mouth. Across his lap lay a stumpy shotgun which I at once recognized as "the Left Bower," whose usual place was at his feet on the box during his journeys. He looked cool and collected, although there were one or two splashes of printer's ink on his shirt and trousers, and from the appearance of my lavatory and towel he had evidently been removing similar stains from his hands. Putting his gun aside and grasping my hand warmly without rising, he began with even more than his usual lazy imperturbability :

"Well, how 's Gilead lookin' to-day?"

It struck me as looking rather disturbed, but, as I was still too bewildered to reply, he continued lazily :

"Ez you did n't hunt me up, I allowed you might hev got kinder petrified and dried up down yer, and I reckoned to run down and rattle round a bit and make things lively for ye. I've jist cleared out a newspaper office over thar. They call it the 'Guardi-an,' though it did n't seem to offer much

perfection to them fellers ez was in it. In fact, it was n't ez much a fight ez it orter hev been. It was rather monotonous for me."

"But what's the row, Bill? What has happened?" I asked excitedly.

"Nothin' to speak of, I tell ye," replied Yuba Bill reflectively. "I jest meandered into that shop over there, and I sez, 'I want ter see the man ez runs this yer mill o' literatoor an' progress.' Thar waz two infants sittin' on high chairs havin' some innocent little game o' pickin' pieces o' lead outer pill-boxes like, and as soon ez they seed me one of 'em crawled under his desk and the other scooted outer the back door. Bimeby the door opens again, and a fluffy coyote-lookin' feller comes in and allows that *he* is responsible for that yer paper. When I saw the kind of animal he was, and that he had n't any weppings, I jist laid the Left Bower down on the floor. Then I sez, 'You allowed in your paper that I oughter hev a little sevility knocked inter me, and I'm here to hev it done. You ken begin it now.' With that I reached for him, and we waltzed oncet or twicet around the room, and then I put him up on the mantelpiece and on them desks and

little boxes, and took him down again, and kinder wiped the floor with him gin'rally, until the first thing I knowed he was outside the winder on the sidewalk. On'y blamed if I did n't forget to open the winder. Ef it had n't been for that, it would hev been all quiet and peaceful-like, and nobody hev knowed it. But the sash being in the way, it sorter created a disturbance and unpleasantness *outside*."

"But what was it all about?" I repeated.
"What had he done to you?"

"Ye 'll find it in that paper," he said, indicating a copy of the "Guardian" that lay on my table with a lazy nod of his head. "P'r'aps you don't read it? No more do I. But Joe Bilson sez to me yesterday: 'Bill,' sez he, 'they 're goin' for ye in the "Guardian."' 'Wot 's that?' sez I. 'Hark to this,' sez he, and reads out that bit that you 'll find there."

I had opened the paper, and he pointed to a paragraph. "There it is. Pooty, ain't it?" I read with amazement as follows:—

"If the Pioneer Stage Company want to keep up with the times, and not degenerate into the old style 'one hoss' road-wagon business, they 'd better make some reform on the line.

They might begin by shipping off some of the old-time whiskey-guzzling drivers who are too high and mighty to do anything but handle the ribbons, and are above speaking to a passenger unless he's a favorite or one of their set. Overpraise for an occasional scrimmage with road agents, and flattery from Eastern greenhorns, have given them the big head. If the fool-killer were let loose on the line with a big club, and knocked a little civility into their heads, it would n't be a bad thing, and would be a particular relief to the passengers for Gilead who have to take the stage from Simpson's Bar."

"That's my stage," said Yuba Bill quietly, when I had ended; "and that's *me*."

"But it's impossible," I said eagerly. "That insult was never written by Captain Jim."

"Captain Jim," repeated Yuba Bill reflectively. "Captain Jim, — yes, that was the name o' the man I was playin' with. Shortish hairy feller, suthin' between a big coyote and the old-style hair-trunk. Fought pretty well for a hay-footed man from Gil-e-ad."

"But you've whipped the wrong man, Bill," I said. "Think again! Have you had any quarrel lately?—run against any

newspaper man?" The recollection had flashed upon me that Lacy Bassett had lately returned from a visit to Stockton.

Yuba Bill regarded his boots on the other arm-chair for a few moments in profound meditation. "There was a sort o' gaudy insect," he began presently, "suthin' half-way betwixt a hoss-fly and a devil's darnin'-needle, ez crawled up onter the box seat with me last week, and buzzed! Now I think on it, he talked high-faluten' o' the infloocene of the press and sech. I may hev said 'shoo' to him when he was hummin' the loudest. I mout hev flicked him off oncet or twicet with my whip. It must be him. Gosh!" he said suddenly, rising and lifting his heavy hand to his forehead, "now I think agin *he was the feller ez crawled under the desk when the fight was goin' on, and stayed there.* Yes, sir, that was *him*. His face looked sorter familiar, but I did n't know him moultin' with his feathers off." He turned upon me with the first expression of trouble and anxiety I had ever seen him wear. "Yes, sir, that's him. And I've kem — me, Yuba Bill! — kem *myself*, a matter of twenty miles, totin' a *gun* — a gun, by Gosh! — to fight that — that — that

potatar-bug!" He walked to the window, turned, walked back again, finished his whiskey with a single gulp, and laid his hand almost despondingly on my shoulder. "Look ye, old — old fell, you and me 's ole friends. Don't give me away. Don't let on a word o' this to any one! Say I kem down yer howl-in' drunk on a gen'ral tear! Say I mistook that newspaper office for a cigar-shop, and — got licked by the boss! Say anythin' you like, 'cept that I took a gun down yer to chase a fly that had settled onter me. Keep the Left Bower in yer back office till I send for it. Ef you 've got a back door somewhere handy where I can slip outer this without bein' seen I 'd be thankful."

As this desponding suggestion appeared to me as the wisest thing for him to do in the then threatening state of affairs outside, — which, had he suspected it, he would have stayed to face, — I quickly opened a door into a courtyard that communicated through an alley with a side street. Here we shook hands and parted; his last dejected ejaculation being, "That potato-bug!" Later I ascertained that Captain Jim had retired to his ranch some four miles distant. He was not seriously hurt,

but looked, to use the words of my informant, "ez ef he 'd been hugged by a playful b'ar." As the "Guardian" made its appearance the next week without the slightest allusion to the fracas, I did not deem it necessary to divulge the real facts. When I called to inquire about Captain Jim's condition, he himself, however, volunteered an explanation.

"I don't mind tellin' you, ez an old friend o' mine and Lacy's, that the secret of that there attack on me and the 'Guardian' was perlitikal. Yes, sir! There was a powerful organization in the interest o' Halkins for assemblyman ez did n't like our high-toned editorials on caucus corruption, and hired a bully to kem down here and suppress us. Why, this yer Lacy spotted the idea to oncet; yer know how keen he is."

"Was Lacy present?" I asked as carelessly as I could.

Captain Jim glanced his eyes over his shoulder quite in his old furtive canine fashion, and then blinked them at me rapidly. "He war! And if it warn't for *his* pluck and *his* science and *his* strength, I don't know whar *I'd* hev been now! Howsom-

ever, it's all right. I've had a fair offer to sell the 'Guardian' over at Simpson's Bar, and it's time I quit throwin' away the work of a man like Lacy Bassett upon it. And between you and me, I've got an idea and suthin' better to put his talens into."

III.

IT was not long before it became evident that the "talens" of Mr. Lacy Bassett, as indicated by Captain Jim, were to grasp at a seat in the state legislature. An editorial in the "Simpson's Bar Clarion" boldly advocated his pretensions. At first it was believed that the article emanated from the gifted pen of Lacy himself, but the style was so unmistakably that of Colonel Starbottle, an eminent political "war-horse" of the district, that a graver truth was at once suggested, namely, that the "Guardian" had simply been transferred to Simpson's Bar, and merged into the "Clarion" solely on this condition. At least it was recognized that it was the hand of Captain Jim which guided the editorial fingers of the colonel, and Captain Jim's money that distended the pockets of that gallant political leader.

Howbeit Lacy Bassett was never elected; in fact he was only for one brief moment a candidate. It was related that upon his first ascending the platform at Simpson's Bar a voice in the audience said lazily, "Come down!" That voice was Yuba Bill's. A slight confusion ensued, in which Yuba Bill whispered a few words in the colonel's ear. After a moment's hesitation the "war-horse" came forward, and in his loftiest manner regretted that the candidate had withdrawn. The next issue of the "Clarion" proclaimed with no uncertain sound that a base conspiracy gotten up by the former proprietor of the "Guardian" to undermine the prestige of the Great Express Company had been ruthlessly exposed, and the candidate on learning it *himself* for the first time, withdrew his name from the canvass, as became a high-toned gentleman. Public opinion, ignoring Lacy Bassett completely, unhesitatingly denounced Captain Jim.

During this period I had paid but little heed to Lacy Bassett's social movements, or the successes which would naturally attend such a character with the susceptible sex. I had heard that he was engaged to Polly Baxter, but that they had quarrelled in conse-

quence of his flirtations with others, especially a Mrs. Sweeny, a profusely ornamented but reputationless widow. Captain Jim had often alluded with a certain respectful pride and delicacy to Polly's ardent appreciation of his friend, and had more than half hinted with the same reverential mystery to their matrimonial union later, and his intention of "doing the square thing" for the young couple. But it was presently noticed that these allusions became less frequent during Lacy's amorous aberrations, and an occasional depression and unusual reticence marked Captain Jim's manner when the subject was discussed in his presence. He seemed to endeavor to make up for his friend's defection by a kind of personal homage to Polly, and not unfrequently accompanied her to church or to singing-class. I have a vivid recollection of meeting him one afternoon crossing the fields with her, and looking into her face with that same wistful, absorbed, and uneasy canine expression that I had hitherto supposed he had reserved for Lacy alone. I do not know whether Polly was averse to the speechless devotion of these yearning brown eyes; her manner was animated and the pretty cheek that was nearest

me mantled as I passed ; but I was struck for the first time with the idea that Captain Jim loved her ! I was surprised to have that fancy corroborated in the remark of another wayfarer whom I met, to the effect, "That now that Bassett was out o' the running it looked ez if Captain Jim was makin' up for time !" Was it possible that Captain Jim had always loved her ? I did not at first know whether to be pained or pleased for his sake. But I concluded that whether the unworthy Bassett had at last found a *rival* in Captain Jim or in the girl herself, it was a displacement that was for Captain Jim's welfare. But as I was about leaving Gilead for a month's transfer to the San Francisco office, I had no opportunity to learn more from the confidences of Captain Jim.

I was ascending the principal staircase of my San Francisco hotel one rainy afternoon, when I was pointedly recalled to Gilead by the passing glitter of Mrs. Sweeny's jewelry and the sudden vanishing behind her of a gentleman who seemed to be accompanying her. A few moments after I had entered my room I heard a tap at my door, and opened it upon Lacy Bassett. I thought he looked a little confused and agitated.

Nevertheless, with an assumption of cordiality and ease he said, "It appears we're neighbors. That's my room next to yours." He pointed to the next room, which I then remembered was a sitting-room *en suite* with my own, and communicating with it by a second door, which was always locked. It had not been occupied since my tenancy. As I suppose my face did not show any extravagant delight at the news of his contiguity, he added, hastily, "There's a transom over the door, and I thought I'd tell you you kin hear everything from the one room to the other."

I thanked him, and told him dryly that, as I had no secrets to divulge and none that I cared to hear, it made no difference to me. As this seemed to increase his confusion and he still hesitated before the door, I asked him if Captain Jim was with him.

"No," he said quickly. "I have n't seen him for a month, and don't want to. Look here, I want to talk to you a bit about him." He walked into the room, and closed the door behind him. "I want to tell you that me and Captain Jim is played! All this runnin' o' me and interferin' with me is played! I'm tired of it. You kin tell him so from me."

"Then you have quarrelled?"

"Yes. As much as any man can quarrel with a darned fool who can't take a hint."

"One moment. Have you quarrelled about Polly Baxter?"

"Yes," he answered querulously. "Of course I have. What does he mean by interfering?"

"Now listen to me, Mr. Bassett," I interrupted. "I have no desire to concern myself in your association with Captain Jim, but since you persist in dragging me into it, you must allow me to speak plainly. From all that I can ascertain you have no serious intentions of marrying Polly Baxter. You have come here from Gilead to follow Mrs. Sweeny, whom I saw you with a moment ago. Now, why do you not frankly give up Miss Baxter to Captain Jim, who will make her a good husband, and go your own way with Mrs. Sweeny? If you really wish to break off your connection with Captain Jim, that's the only way to do it."

His face, which had exhibited the weakest and most pitiable consciousness at the mention of Mrs. Sweeny, changed to an expression of absolute stupefaction as I concluded.

"Wot stuff are you tryin' to fool me with?" he said at last roughly.

"I mean," I replied sharply, "that this double game of yours is disgraceful. Your association with Mrs. Sweeny demands the withdrawal of any claim you have upon Miss Baxter at once. If you have no respect for Captain Jim's friendship, you must at least show common decency to her."

He burst into a half-relieved, half-hysterical laugh. "Are you crazy?" gasped he. "Why, Captain Jim's just huntin' *me* down to make *me* marry Polly. That's just what the row's about. That's just what he's interferin' for — just to carry out his darned fool ideas o' gettin' a wife for me; just his vanity to say *he's* made the match. It's *me* that he wants to marry to that Baxter girl — not himself. He's too cursed selfish for that."

I suppose I was not different from ordinary humanity, for in my unexpected discomfiture I despised Captain Jim quite as much as I did the man before me. Reiterating my remark that I had no desire to mix myself further in their quarrels, I got rid of him with as little ceremony as possible. But a few minutes later, when the farcical side of the situation struck me, my irritation was somewhat mollified, without however increasing my respect for either of the actors.

The whole affair had assumed a triviality that was simply amusing, nothing more, and I even looked forward to a meeting with Captain Jim and *his* exposition of the matter — which I knew would follow — with pleasurable anticipation. But I was mistaken.

One afternoon, when I was watching the slanting volleys of rain driven by a strong southwester against the windows of the hotel reading-room, I was struck by the erratic movements of a dripping figure outside that seemed to be hesitating over the entrance to the hotel. At times furtively penetrating the porch as far as the vestibule, and again shyly recoiling from it, its manner was so strongly suggestive of some timid animal that I found myself suddenly reminded of Captain Jim and the memorable evening of his exodus from Eureka Gulch. As the figure chanced to glance up to the window where I stood I saw to my astonishment that it *was* Captain Jim himself, but so changed and haggard that I scarcely knew him. I instantly ran out into the hall and vestibule, but when I reached the porch he had disappeared. Either he had seen me and wished to avoid me, or he had encountered the ob-

ject of his quest, which I at once concluded must be Lacy Bassett. I was so much impressed and worried by his appearance and manner, that, in this belief, I overcame my aversion to meeting Bassett, and even sought him through the public rooms and lobbies in the hope of finding Captain Jim with him. But in vain ; possibly he had succeeded in escaping his relentless friend.

As the wind and rain increased at nightfall and grew into a tempestuous night, with deserted streets and swollen waterways, I did not go out again, but retired early, inexplicably haunted by the changed and brooding face of Captain Jim. Even in my dreams he pursued me in his favorite likeness of a wistful, anxious, and uneasy hound, who, on my turning to caress him familiarly, snapped at me viciously, and appeared to have suddenly developed a snarling rabid fury. I seemed to be awakened at last by the sound of his voice. For an instant I believed the delusion a part of my dream. But I was mistaken ; I was lying broad awake, and the voice clearly had come from the next room, and was distinctly audible over the transom.

"I've had enough of it," he said, "and

I 'm givin' ye now — this night — yer last chance. Quit this hotel and that woman, and go back to Gilead and marry Polly. Don't do it and I 'll kill ye, ez sure ez you sit there gapin' in that chair. If I can't get ye to fight me like a man, — and I 'll spit in yer face or put some insult onto you afore that woman, afore everybody, ez would make a bigger skunk nor you turn, — I 'll hunt ye down and kill ye in your tracks."

There was a querulous murmur of interruption in Lacy's voice, but whether of defiance or appeal I could not distinguish. Captain Jim's voice again rose, dogged and distinct.

"Ef *you* kill me it 's all the same, and I don't say that I won't thank ye. This yer world is too crowded for yer and me, Lacy Bassett. I 've believed in ye, trusted in ye, lied for ye, and fought for ye. From the time I took ye up — a feller-passenger to 'Fresco — believin' there wor the makin's of a man in ye, to now, you fooled me, — fooled me afore the Eureka boys; fooled me afore Gilead; fooled me afore *her*; fooled me afore God! It 's got to end here. Ye've got to take the curse of that foolishness off o' me! You've got to do one single thing

that 's like the man I took ye for, or you 've got to die. Times waz when I 'd have wished it for your account — that 's gone, Lacy Bassett! You 've got to do it for *me*. You 've got to do it so I don't see 'd—d fool' writ in the eyes of every man ez looks at me."

He had apparently risen and walked towards the door. His voice sounded from another part of the room.

"I 'll give ye till to-morrow mornin' to do suthin' to lift this curse off o' me. Ef you refoose, then, by the living God, I 'll slap yer face in the dinin'-room, or in the office afore them all! You hear me!"

There was a pause, and then a quick sharp explosion that seemed to fill and expand both rooms until the windows were almost lifted from their casements, a hysterical inarticulate cry from Lacy, the violent opening of a door, hurried voices, and the tramping of many feet in the passage. I sprang out of bed, partly dressed myself, and ran into the hall. But by that time I found a crowd of guests and servants around the next door, some grasping Bassett, who was white and trembling, and others kneeling by Captain Jim, who was half lying in the doorway against the wall.

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"He heard it all," Bassett gasped hysterically, pointing to me. "*He* knows that this man wanted to kill me."

Before I could reply, Captain Jim partly raised himself with a convulsive effort. Wiping away the blood that, oozing from his lips, already showed the desperate character of his internal wound, he said in a husky and hurried voice: "It's all right, boys! It's my fault. It was *me* who done it. I went for him in a mean underhanded way jest now, when he had n't a weppin nor any show to defend himself. We gripped. He got a holt o' my derringer — you see that's *my* pistol there, I swear it — and turned it agin me in self-defense, and sarved me right. I swear to God, gentlemen, it's so!" Catching sight of my face, he looked at me, I fancied half imploringly and half triumphantly, and added, "I might hev knowed it! I allers allowed Lacy Bassett was game! — game, gentlemen — and he was. If it's my last word, I say it — he was game!"

And with this devoted falsehood upon his lips and something of the old canine instinct in his failing heart, as his head sank back he seemed to turn it towards Bassett, as if to

stretch himself out at his feet. Then the light failed from his yearning upward glance, and the curse of foolishness was lifted from him forever.

So conclusive were the facts, that the coroner's jury did not deem it necessary to detain Mr. Bassett for a single moment after the inquest. But he returned to Gilead, married Polly Baxter, and probably on the strength of having "killed his man," was unopposed on the platform next year, and triumphantly elected to the legislature!

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